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With her smoke trailing behind her and the guns barking in rapid succession, the Colodia raced toward the scene.

NAVY BOYS TO THE RESCUE

OR

ANSWERING THE WIRELESS CALL FOR HELP

BY

HALSEY DAVIDSON

AUTHOR OF "NAVY BOYS AFTER A SUBMARINE," "NAVY BOYS CHASING A SEA RAIDER," ETC.

NEW YORK

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BOOKS FOR BOYS

NAVY BOYS SERIES

By Halsey Davidson

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NAVY BOYS AFTER A SUBMARINE
Or Protecting the Giant Convoy

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Or Answering the Wireless Call for Help

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Navy Boys to the Rescue

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NAVY BOYS TO THE RESCUE

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NAVY BOYS TO THE RESCUE

CHAPTER I

THE FRIENDLY GRIP

"AND yonder's a snap-dragon; and that's a buttercup. That is feverfew growing over there; and there's foxglove right there in that swampy place. Those are cowslip blossoms—the English cowslip is different from ours."

"Whew!" blew Phil Morgan, unpuckering his lips and breaking off the haunting little air he had been whistling. "I wouldn't believe you knew so much about the *flora* of this strange land, Frenchy."

"Oi, oi! Is it Flora he's bragging about? Then Frenchy's got a new girl!"

"Sounds to me," mumbled Al Torrance, who lay along the flower-bestrewed bank with his hat over his eyes, "that he was discussing the fauna of the country—with his snap-dragons, and fox's gloves, and cows slipping."

"Ignoramus that you are!" scoffed Michael Donahue, otherwise "Frenchy." "I am talkin' to Whistler. *He* knows something and appreciates the profundity of me learnin'."

"Ye-as," drawled Torrance, otherwise "Torry," as their leader began droning away, his lips puck-

ered again. "He knows just enough to whistle the same awful tune for an hour. What is it, anyway, Phil?"

"The tune the old cow died on, I guess," suggested Ikey Rosenmeyer.

"It's a tune Phoebe was playing on the piano a good deal the last time we were home," said Whistler with some gravity. "Wish I'd hear from the folks again. I am worried about Phoebe."

He spoke of his eldest sister, who during the last few months had not been well. Although, like many brothers and sisters, Philip Morgan, by his chums usually called Whistler, and Phoebe had their differences, now when far from home, "the folks" seem nearer and dearer than ever in his mind.

Philip Morgan lay with his chums on a bank beside a tiny trickle of water called a brook in that shire, although it was nothing more than a rill. They were high up on "the downs," overlooking a port in which the American destroyer *Colodia* lay at anchor amid a multitude of naval vessels of three nations.

Over the sea a thick haze, on land the yellow sunshine, so welcome when it is seen in England that it seems more beautiful than elsewhere. The boys had forty-three hours' shore leave, and for that brief space of time they desired, as most

sailors do, to get just as far away in spirit and in surroundings from the ship as possible.

They had tramped into the country the day before, spent the night in four wonderful beds in an old inn that might have harbored some of Sir Francis Drake's men at the time of the Armada, and were now due at the wharf in a few hours.

Life aboard a destroyer or an American submarine chaser in foreign service is not very pleasant if it is exciting. The space for sleeping, for instance, on these fast vessels is scarcely greater than that assigned to the crews of submarines. As Ikey Rosenmeyer, who possessed a riotous imagination, had said at the inn:

"Oi, oi! sleeping in a real bed again is better than bein' at home in Ireland, and Frenchy says that's heaven 'cause his mother came from there. Why, it is better'n heaven! You could spread out your legs and wiggle all your toes without havin' the master-at-arms down on you like a thousand of brick."

Frenchy, in a dreamy and poetic mood, not infrequent when the romantic Irish blood in his veins was stirred, was gazing off over the sea at the fogbank.

"Think of it," he murmured. "How many hundred an' thousan' of ships have sailed out of this harbor into just such a fogbank as that—"

"And never came back," interrupted Torry.

"Some tough old gobs, the ancient British seaman, boy."

"'Tough' is right," chuckled Frenchy, his poetic feelings exploded. "And they haven't got over it yet. They've got old-timers in the British Navy now that can remember when the cat was used on the men's backs, reg'lar."

"And every British sailor had tar on his breeches—that's why they used to call 'em 'brave British tars,'" scoffed Torry. "Can it! These English chaps are all right. They aren't much different from us garbies."

"Is *that* so?" exclaimed Ikey, whose sharp eyes allowed little to escape them. "What kind of a deep-sea crab do you call this comin' down the road right now, I want to know?"

Phil Morgan paid no attention to what his mates were talking about. The peaceful English landscape charmed his eye.

Down the gently sloping road which, after a mile or so, led into the Upper Town, as it was called in distinction from the port, or Lower Town, the stone cottages—some almost hidden by vines—stood sentinel-wise along the way.

One rather larger house was a schoolhouse. Nothing at all like the schoolhouses in America in appearance. But Phil Morgan knew it was a schoolhouse, and that the school was in session, for he had seen the children filing in not long be-

fore and their voices had been raised in song just before Frenchy had begun to note the different flowers.

The excited chatter of the other boys finally aroused Morgan from his contemplation of the peaceful scene. In the other direction, toward which his mates were looking, the outlook was not so peaceful. At least, not at one particular spot in the hedge-bordered road. It did not need a sailor's weather eye to see that the situation was "squally."

The "deep-sea crab," the presence of which Ikey had announced, proved on further examination to be two individuals, not one. But they were closely attached to one another and the way they "wee-wawed," as Torry said, from one side of the road to the other, certainly would lead to the supposition that intoxication was the cause of such tacking from hedge to hedge.

"And one of 'em's one of our own garbies," declared Frenchy. "Isn't that a shame?"

"But look at that big feller, will you?" gasped Ikey. "Why, he must weigh a ton!"

"You're stretching that a bit, Ikey," admonished Whistler, breaking off in his tune to speak. "But he is a whale of a man."

"Biggest garby I ever saw," breathed Torry, amazed.

It was the big fellow only, it proved, who was

partly intoxicated. He was a British sailor. His companion was both perfectly sober and perfectly mad. His face was aflame as he and his unwelcome companion approached the four Navy Boys.

The big fellow gripped him by the collar of his blouse, and it was utterly impossible for the Yankee lad to get away from "the friendly grip."

"Talk about this 'hands across the sea' stuff," murmured Torrance. "Here's a case where it is going too far. We'll have to rescue a brother garby, won't we?"

"Believe me, that's a reg'lar mamma's boy Johnny Bull has got his grip on, too," chuckled Frenchy.

"Hush up, you fellows," advised Phil Morgan, with sudden interest. "I believe I know that fellow."

"Not Goliath yonder?" cried Ikey Rosenmeyer. "I didn't know you sailed with such craft."

"The other chap," Morgan explained.

"If he's a friend," began Torrance, commencing to roll back his sleeves suggestively.

"Sit down!" advised the older boy, sharply. "We'd look nice piling onto that big fellow, wouldn't we?"

"And the whole of us couldn't handle him," murmured Frenchy.

"You never know till you try," said the optimistic Torrance.

"This is a case for strategy," stated Morgan. "Now, don't any of you fellows lose your heads." Then he hailed the two tacking along the road:

"Ahoy! Hey, you!"

The American lad who was held in durance by the British sailor looked up and showed something besides the red flag of annoyance in his countenance.

"I say, you fellows!" he cried. "Help me out of this, will you?"

At this the huge British seaman for the first time appeared to see the four boys on the bank beside the road.

"My heye!" he bellowed, standing still, but wagging his head from side to side in a perfectly ridiculous way. "My heye! 'Ere's a 'ole bloomin' ship load of 'em. Ahoy, me 'earties, let the heagle scream!" and he led off in a mighty cheer that awoke the echoes of the heretofore peaceful countryside.

Frenchy and Ikey, in great glee, sprang up and cheered with him. But the expression in the countenance of the giant's captive caused the two older Navy Boys to smother their amusement.

"That's the way he's been going on for four hours—and more," groaned the captive. "Why! he hung on to my collar all the time we were eat-

ing dinner up there at that inn. Made the barmaid cut up his victuals for him. Paid her a shilling for doing it."

"Say, is her name Flora?" Ikey asked, at once interested. "Is that the girl Frenchy was just talking abut?"

But Torrance quenched him with a hand on his mouth. The situation of the Yankee youth in that giant's hands seemed more serious than they supposed. The grip of the big hand never relaxed.

" 'Ere we are, all together, me 'earties," rumbled the giant. "Hi'm glad to know yuh. Hi'm Willum Johnson, 'im that 'ad a barrow hin the Old Kent Road before the war. Hand jolly well knowed Hi was to the perlice," confessed the man frankly.

"Hit allus took six bobbies to take me hin, lads. Hand now *one* o' the bloomin' hofficers makes me walk a chalkline, haboard ship. Hi tell yuh, ain't this war terrible?"

"That's what it is," admitted Frenchy, staring at the man with wide-open eyes.

"Come over here and sit down—and tell us all about it," Whistler Morgan said, beckoning.

"Hi'll go yuh!" declared the giant seaman. "Hand so wull me friend—one o' the nicest little Yankees Hi ever come across."

The strange Yankee sailor was too much dis-

turbed by his situation to look very closely at Phil and his comrades. The viselike grip of the semi-intoxicated giant on his collar was the principal thing in the victim's mind.

Almost as soon as the British seaman sprawled on the grassy bank his head began to nod and his eyes to close.

"He's going off," whispered Al Torrance.

"You'd think he would," returned the victim of the over-friendly seaman, in the same tone, "if you could have seen him eat and drink. You never saw such an appetite! He had everybody at that inn standing around and gaping at us."

It was evident that the young sailor felt his position deeply. He was a nice looking fellow, very neat in his dress, and with delicate features.

"How did you come to fall in with him in the first place?" Al asked, as the giant began to snore.

"Why," explained the stranger, "I started to walk down to the port because it was so pleasant. He was sitting outside the place where I stopped for tea and muffins after I'd walked a way. I had no idea he was so—so far gone. But he must have been drinking for days," casting a disgusted glance at his close companion whose ham-like hand never relaxed. "He learned where I was going, and he at once got a grip on my collar. He hasn't let go since—I never saw such a man!" concluded the stranger morosely.

"His hand will drop off when he gets sound asleep," Whistler said comfortingly. "Then we'll sneak."

"Don't you believe it!" whispered the other in vast disgust. "He fell asleep after dinner, but his fingers are just clamped on to my collar. When I tried to wriggle away, he awoke. See!"

He tried to pull away from the friendly grip. At once the British seaman half aroused; but his fingers never relaxed.

"William Johnson his my nyme—
Seaman's my hav-o-cation!
Hi'm hin this war for a penny-bun—
Hand so is hall my nation!'

Hoo-roo!" mumbled the gigantic sailor, and fell asleep again.

"Now, what do you know about that?" demanded the victim of brotherly love. "And me —Well, I'm due aboard the *Colodia* today."

"The *Colodia!*" exclaimed the four Navy Boys in chorus.

None of them wore a designating mark, for they had on their white service caps. But the *Colodia* was the Yankee destroyer to which Morgan, Torrance, Donahue and Rosenmeyer belonged. The four gazed on the stranger with increased interest at his statement.

"Say," Whistler asked, "aren't you George Belding? Didn't you and your folks come up to

Seacove from New York five or six years ago and spend the summer in the old Habershaw House? I'm Phil Morgan. We lived right next to the Habershaw House."

"My goodness!" exclaimed the strange youth, sticking out his hand to grab Whistler's. "And your father, Dr. Morgan, and mine went to college together. That's what brought us up to Seacove. Sure! My mother wasn't well. We all got fat and sassy up there. I declare I'm glad to see you, Phil Morgan!"

"Me long lost brother!" whispered Frenchy to the others. "Have you still got the strawberry mark upon your arm?"

But Al Torrance was quite as serious as Whistler and the newly-introduced George Belding.

"Say, fellows," Al said, "if he's going to be one of us on the old destroyer, we've got to help him out of this mess."

"Go ahead! How?" demanded Ikey.

Al produced a pocketknife which he opened quickly. It had a long and sharp blade. He approached the snoring giant on the bank.

"Oi Oi!" gasped Ikey Rosenmeyer. "Never mind! Don't kill him in cold blood. Remember, Torry, it's Germans we're fightin', not these Britishers."

"What are you going to do?" demanded Belding.

"Cut your collar away," said Torrance. "That's about all you can do. If he wants to hang on to the collar, let him."

"It'll spoil his shirt," objected Ikey.

"Sh! Go ahead," murmured Belding. "It's a good idea. I couldn't get at my own knife and do it, with him hanging on to me so tightly."

"Take care, Al," advised Whistler. "And you other fellows stand aside. Be ready to run when George is free."

His advice was good. The giant seaman still snored, but it would not take much to rouse him.

The five boys were now so much interested in the attempt to get Belding free that they took no heed of anything else. So they were all shocked when a chorus of steam whistles and sirens suddenly broke forth from the port below them. A gun boomed on the admiral's ship. Pandemonium was let loose without warning.

"Oh, my aunt!" groaned George Belding, "what is *that?*"

"Willum Johnson" awoke with a start and a grunt, and, sitting up on the bank, demanded of everybody in general, " 'Oo's shootin' hof the bloomin' gun?"

But Whistler and Torry had whirled to look out to sea. They had heard a similar alarm before. Out of the blue-gray fogbank over the sea, and high, high up toward the hazy sky, whirled a

black object, no bigger at first than a bird. But how rapidly it approached the port, and how quickly its outline became perfectly clear!

"A Zep, boys!" cried Al Torrance. "There's a raid on! That's a German machine, sure's you are a foot high!"

"Are you sure?" murmured Belding, who had been dragged quickly to his feet by the giant.

"Hit's the bloomin' 'Uns—no fear it ain't!" ejaculated the big British seaman. "Ah! There goes the a-he-rial guns."

Splotches of white smoke sprang up from several shoulders of the hill that overlooked the port. The watchful coast-defense men were not unprepared; but the enemy airship, rapidly growing bigger in the boys' eyes, winged its way nearer to the land, boldly ignoring the shells sent up to meet it.

"She's going to drop her bombs right over the town!" gasped Whistler, grabbing Belding, who was nearest.

CHAPTER II

THE HUN IN HIS FURY

WHEELING up from behind them on the higher shoulder of the hill, an airplane spiraled into the upper ether, in an attempt to get above the huge machine that had, two minutes before, appeared out of the sea fog. But this attempt to balk the Hun, like those of the anti-aircraft guns in their emplacements about the port, promised little success.

The fog had made the close approach of the huge Zeppelin possible, and now the rumble of the motors of the enemy machine could be heard clearly by the four Navy Boys on the hillside and their two companions.

"Oh, cracky!" gasped Al Torrance. "She's coming!"

"And right this way!" gulped Ikey Rosenmeyer. "If she drops a bomb—"

"Good-night!" completed Frenchy in a sepulchral tone.

"Let's get under cover!" cried George Belding, striving again to get away from the "friendly grip" of the British sailor, Willum Johnson.

"Hold on!" commanded Whistler Morgan. "No use losing our heads over this."

"If one of those bombs lands near us we'll likely lose more than our heads," grumbled Torry.

"Wait! If we run like a bunch of scared rabbits, we are likely to run right into danger rather than away from it."

"Those horns down there say 'Find a cellar!' " whispered Frenchy.

"Oi, oi!" added Ikey. "There ain't no cellars up here on this hill yet."

"Keep cool," repeated Whistler. The other boys were used to listening to him, and to following his advice. He was a cautious as well as a courageous lad, and his chums were usually safe in following Philip Morgan's lead.

These four boys, all hailing from the New England coast town of Seacove, had begun their first "hitch," as an enlistment is called, in the United States Navy as apprentice seamen, several months before America got into the Great War, and some months before the oldest of the four was eighteen.

They had now spent more than a year and a half in the service, and their experiences had been many and varied. After their initial training at Saugarack, the big Naval training camp, the four chums, with others of their friends and camp associates, had been sent aboard the torpedo boat destroyer, *Colodia,* one of the newest, largest, and fastest of her type in the United States Navy.

The *Colodia's* first two cruises were full of excitement and adventure for the four Navy Boys, especially for Philip Morgan; for he fell overboard from the destroyer and was picked up by the German submarine U-812, and his experiences thereon and escape therefrom, are narrated in the first volume of this series, entitled: "Navy Boys After the Submarines; Or, Protecting the Giant Convoy."

The second of the series, "Navy Boys Chasing a Sea Raider; or Landing a Million Dollar Prize," relates the experiences of these four friends on a longer and even more adventurous cruise of the *Colodia.* Under the command of Ensign MacMasters, the Navy Boys as members of a prize crew, took the captured *Graf von Posen* into Norfolk; and their experiences on the captured raider made a dramatic and exciting story of the day-by-day work of the boys of the Navy.

Through their kind friend Mr. Alonzo Minnette, who was holding a volunteer position at Washington in the Navy Department, the four chums obtained a chance to cruise with the superdreadnaught *Kennebunk,* a brand new and one of the largest of the modern American fighting machines launched during the first months of the war. The *Colodia* having gone across the Atlantic while the boys were with the captured raider, they with Ensign MacMasters were very glad to join

the crew of the huge superdreadnaught in the interim.

The third volume of the series, "Navy Boys Behind the Big Guns; Or, Sinking the German U-Boats," took our heroes into perils and adventures which they will long remember, for they included work in the gun turrets of the *Kennebunk,* a wreck that threatened the lives of all four chums, a mix-up with German spies, and finally a record trip across the Atlantic by which the huge superdreadnaught arrived at the rendezvous in time to take part in a naval engagement which put a part of the Hun navy to flight.

Now the four friends were back on the *Colodia* which was doing patrol duty off the English and French coasts, and convoying troop and food ships through the submarine and mine zones. The base of the squadron of which the destroyer was a member was at this English port, on the hillside above which Philip Morgan, Alfred Torrance, Michael Donahue and Ikey Rosenmeyer have been introduced just as they met the American sailor lad, George Belding, and his doubtful friend, the giant ex-coster, "Willum" Johnson.

"Keep cool," Whistler urged again, as the Zeppelin sailed inland. "There is no use running——"

His further speech was smothered by a terrific explosion from the port below. A lurid burst of

flame, stronger that the sunlight, shot into the air where a wharf and warehouse had been. Smoke followed, instantly hiding the mark the bomb from the Zeppelin had found.

This daylight raid was the boldest the Germans had attempted. The enemy must have supposed the fog was over the land as well as the sea, or he would never have risked the attack.

Again a nerve-racking explosion following a flash of light that seared their eyeballs, and the middle of the town—the market place—was shrouded by thick smoke.

"The dirty 'ounds!" bawled the British seaman, suddenly finding his voice. "The dirty 'ounds! They're killin' women an' kids down there! Lemme get my bloomin' 'ands on 'em!"

He dropped George Belding's collar at last and would have started in a clumsy run down the hill. It was Whistler who stopped him, with a two-handed grip on the Englishman's collar now.

"What good would you be down there, man?" the American youth demanded. "You'd only get yours, too, maybe. Those bombs are falling two or three thousand feet."

"Argh!" growled Willum Johnson, shaking his huge fists in the air, his face raised to the coming Zeppelin. The growl was animal-like, not human. "Argh! Lemme get 'em——"

A third bomb exploded. A big house below

them, half way down the hillside, disappeared. It was as though a monstrous sponge had been wiped across that spot and erased the building!

"Oh! Look out! Look out!" sobbed Frenchy, and covered his eyes with his hands.

His chum Ikey shook beside him, but could not close his eyes to the horror.

The Zeppelin was curving around, evidently determined to make for the sea and the fogbank again. Beneath it, on either side, even above it, the bursts of white smoke betrayed the explosion of aerial shells the defense guns were firing at the enemy machine. And all the time the single British airplane on duty was climbing skyward.

"If that thing can only get above the Zep.!" murmured Al Torrance.

Suddenly the airplane darted toward the sea, in a sharp slant upward. Bravely the pilot sought to cut off the Zeppelin's escape into the fogbank out of which she had burst five minutes before.

Guns from the Huns' airship began to bark. They were firing on the British plane. The latter's guns made no reply as she continued to mount into the upper air.

The course of the Hun machine was changed again. In approaching the hills surrounding the port the Zeppelin was brought much nearer to the earth.

The ship was indeed a monster! Swung land-

ward to escape the mounting airplane, the Zeppelin, its motors thundering, came closer and closer to the spot where the American sailor boys were standing.

"Bli'me!" roared the apparently fast-sobering Britisher. "They are goin' to drop one o' them blarsted buns on our bloomin' 'eads!"

"'Buns' is good," groaned Al. *"Here she comes!"*

It seemed as though the great airship was directly above them. The boys actually saw the bomb released and fall!

There was no possible mistake on the part of the brutal crew and commander of the Zeppelin. They knew very well the bomb would fall upon no warship in the harbor, or any possible storage place of munitions. Up here on the hillside were nothing but little dwellings and—the schoolhouse!

As though it were aimed at that house of instruction, the great shell fell and burst! If teacher and pupils had descended into the cellar at the first alarm of the horns and guns, it would scarcely have availed to save them. The shot was too direct.

One moment the green-tiled, freshly whitened walls of the schoolhouse stood out plainly against the yellow and green landscape. Then, with a roar, it was wiped out and a huge balloon of whitish brown smoke took its place.

The explosion shook the air and the earth. The group of Navy Boys were struck to the ground. Only the gigantic figure of Willum Johnson remained erect, and he wavering on his feet and mouthing threats at the enemy.

"They killed 'em! They killed 'em!" he bawled, when he could be heard. "The women an' the kids!"

He started on a staggering run, up the road this time, as though trying to follow the wake of the fast descending Zeppelin. The British airplane was above the enemy machine and was raking it with machine gun fire. Some damage had been suffered by the Zeppelin. She was descending, out of control.

But Morgan ran down the hill, toward the bombed schoolhouse—or the place where it had been. The other boys followed him. Frenchy was frankly crying, and Ikey clung to his hand as though afraid to let go.

CHAPTER III

THE MISSING MAN

THE smoking ruins of the schoolhouse and its outbuildings were now visible. The five boys came to the edge of the crater which marked the effect of the explosion of the bomb from the Zeppelin.

From somewhere appeared an old man in a smock, and his hard, weather-beaten face writhed with an emotion unspeakable. His outstretched shaking hand pointed to the spot where the schoolhouse had stood.

"I saw her face at the pane but the moment before. She waved her hand to me," he said.

His awestricken tone made the American lads tremble. A younger man with his face bloody from a wound above the temple appeared beside the boys with the same startling suddenness.

" 'Twas his gran'darter. She teached here," whispered the wounded man. He laid hold upon the old man. "Come away, Daddie," he said. "Come away wi' me now."

A woman screamed up the road just as Phil Morgan spied a motor ambulance with a huge red cross on it, mounting from the port. Rescue

parties were afoot already. There really was nothing the American lads could do at the wrecked schoolhouse. The shrill cry of the woman above them caused all five to turn to look.

" 'Tis down! 'Tis down!"

The Americans were just in season to see the Zeppelin crumble like a huge concertina and dive toward the earth. Fire broke out amidships.

The landing of the Hun airship took place far up on the open hill, in a pasture above the road. The boys could see the gigantic British seaman toiling toward the Zeppelin. He was the nearest person to the burning airship as it came down, although there were other men running over the downs toward the spot.

"Cracky!" exclaimed Al Torrance to Belding, "your big chum is going to fight them single handed!"

"Come on, fellows!" Whistler cried, starting away. "We can do no good here. But those Germans must not escape!"

"No chance!" exclaimed Ikey. "They won't even try. If the English hung every member of the Zep crews they caught the Kaiser would soon have hard work finding men to man the bomb-droppers."

"Right you are," Frenchy agreed. "The baby-killers!"

He was still sobbing. Right then and there the

Navy Boys would have been glad to take vengeance on the crew of the Zeppelin. The first man was descending out of the burning machine. The Americans saw the huge British sailor spring upon him.

"There was no *kamerad* stuff," Torry observed. The two locked and went to the ground, disappearing in a wallow.

At this sight the boys uttered a cheer and leaped the hedge beside the road. They tore up the hill as fast as they could run. A shot sounded, and the spurt of flame and smoke marked the appearance of a farmer with a shotgun. He, however, was firing at the balloon of the Zeppelin, not at her crew.

From the machine a second figure dropped to the ground, and just as the farmer fired his second barrel. This second member of the crew darted away from the burning wreck and disappeared into the furze that covered the summit of the hill.

"That Heinie's running away, Whistler!" cried Al, but kept on himself with the younger boys toward the airship.

Belding looked at Whistler. "Shall we let him beat it?" the former asked the Seacove boy.

"Not on your life!" Whistler cried. "Come on! If we're not a match for one Heinie—we two—then——"

They turned directly up the hill, and in two

minutes were over the ridge. Instead of the smooth pasture land they had just crossed this side of the hill was of barren soil and covered with boulders. To follow a trail here was scarcely possible, but the two American boys soon found traces of the Hun, where he had broken through the bushes on the summit.

"We don't know this country," Whistler said cautiously. "There may be lots of hide-outs around here."

"He doesn't know it, either," Belding declared.

"We don't know that," the other boy said sharply. "They say every square foot of England was mapped by German spies before the war. Somehow, that Heinie slipping away the way he did, looks fishy."

"How so?"

"They always give up—these Zep crews. They know the worst will happen to them is internment. Running away like this will put him in dead wrong, if he's caught," added Whistler.

"I suppose that's so, Morgan," agreed Belding. "But maybe the poor fish was scared out of his five senses."

"Let Frenchy tell it, these Heinies don't own five senses," Whistler chuckled. "He says they haven't got more than two."

"Uh-huh. That might be. Maybe this fellow ran for quite another reason."

"What's that?"

"Because he is a spy."

Whistler digested that idea slowly. It looked reasonable. He knew that it was said sometimes the bombing machines dropped spies on British soil.

"We'd better be careful, then," he said at last. "The chap may be armed."

"No 'maybe' about it. He's sure to be," Belding said vigorously. "We'd look nice getting shot ashore here by a Heinie. What would our folks say?"

"By the way, George," Whistler Morgan said, "how are your folks? Do you hear from them? When did you come across the pond?"

"One at a time!" exclaimed Belding. "Lil writes me—you remember my sister, Lilian? She was all legs and lanky yellow hair when we were up there in Seacove that summer."

"I remember her," Whistler admitted. "She's a pretty girl."

"Huh! Think so? She isn't a patch on your sister, Alice, for looks. And that reminds me—have you heard the news?"

"I've not heard much news from home lately, if that is what you mean," said Whistler. "Guess my mail's been delayed."

"Why, say! let me tell you about it. First of all, I came across two months ago and have been

on father's yacht, the *Sirius*—sub. chaser, you know. Course it isn't called the *Sirius* any more. He let the Navy Department have it, you know."

"Why, George!" gasped Whistler, "I didn't know you folks had a yacht."

"Father owns a slew of freight ships. It's on one of his ships that they are all sailing next month for Bahia."

"That's in South America," said Whistler thoughtfully.

"Yes. Father thinks there is going to be the biggest kind of commercial opportunity in Brazil and other South American states after the war. The Germans will be in bad down there. Father is going to establish a branch of his business in Bahia, and stay himself for a year or more—perhaps until the war's end."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, I do, Country!" laughed Belding. "And Lil and mother are going to take your sisters with them."

"Wha—what's that you say?" Whistler ejaculated, in blank amazement.

"I guess you haven't heard from home lately," Belding said. "Didn't you know anything about it?"

"Not a word."

"They'll sail on the *Redbird*. That's one of father's biggest ships. You see, Doctor Morgan

was in New York and came to see us, so Lil wrote me. And he said how much he desired to send your sister Phoebe off on a long sea voyage. So they made it up, right there and then. Your sister Alice is going, too, and my mother will chaperone the crowd. Tell you what, Phil, if it wasn't for this man's war, I'd like to drop everything here and go with them. Some sport! What wouldn't we do to those girls when the *Redbird* crossed the equator!"

The boys had been standing in the lee of a big rock while thus conversing in low tones. Suddenly Whistler saw a movement on the hillside below them. A man dived behind a boulder, disappearing like a flash.

"There!" whispered Whistler. "I saw him! Did you?"

"I saw something," admitted Belding. "Wish that big Johnny Bull friend of mine was here."

"He'd be a bigger mark for a pistol ball—if the Hun is armed—than we make!"

"Good-*night!*" breathed Belding. "I don't wish to consider myself as any such target."

Nevertheless the two lads did not hesitate to approach the spot where they had caught a glimpse of the escaping German. Whistler Morgan, at least, had been in many a perilous corner since he had joined the Navy as apprentice seaman, and he was not likely to show the white feather

now. As for George Belding, Whistler did not know much about him; but when they were some years younger and George had visited Seacove, he seemed to be as courageous a boy as one would wish to meet.

The boys on shore leave of course were without arms of any description. And, as had been suggested, the German might be armed. The Americans took no chances in their search for the enemy.

There was a big boulder just ahead, and at Whistler's suggestion the two climbed this and, lying flat on their stomachs, wormed their way to the summit, from which a better view of what lay below on the side hill could be obtained.

"Sh! That's the fellow!" hissed Belding, seizing Whistler's arm almost at once.

The Seacove boy saw the olive-gray figure at the same moment. The two lay and watched the German making himself comfortable in a little hollow between two rocks some rods below their station. The man had evidently scrutinized all his surroundings and believed himself to be unobserved.

"What's he got in his bundle?" whispered George Belding.

"Got me. I saw he had that when he dropped from the burning Zep."

The two had not long to wait to learn just what

the man carried with him. Being assured that he was alone, he dropped the bundle and proceeded to untie it. Then he began to remove his flying clothes.

"A disguise," were the words Belding's lips mouthed, and Whistler nodded.

The latter was making a thorough scrutiny of the German's face. Whether they captured the man or not he proposed to know him again if he met him—no matter where.

He was lean-faced, with a prominent nose, and eyes that Whistler thought were gray or a pale blue. He wore a tuft of black whisker on his chin and a little moustache. This, and the way he wore his hair—long and shaggy—made him look anything but Teutonic.

The boys beheld the fellow, stripped of his outer garments, don loose trousers, a farmer's smock, and a cap. Although he did not look English in the face, he was dressed much as the boys had seen the neighboring agriculturists and drovers dress. He even put on a pair of heavy boots instead of the laced shoes he had worn in the Zeppelin.

"That chap means business," whispered Belding. And then he suddenly grunted almost aloud, for out of his bundle the spy produced a pair of automatic pistols which he proceeded to hide under the loose blouse he now wore.

"He is prepared to fight," agreed Whistler under his breath. "We can't capture him without help, George."

"You've said something, Whistler! One of us will have to go for help."

"Which shall it be—you or I?" asked Phil in the same cautious tone. "Al and the others would be glad to be in on this."

"And my friend Johnson, from the Old Kent Road He's sober now and worth two ordinary men in a scrimmage," and Belding smiled broadly.

"Shall I go?"

"All right," agreed Belding. "But be quick. And if I'm not here, I'll drop papers to show my trail. I've plenty of old letters in my pocket to tear up."

"Good idea," said Whistler, preparing to slide feet first down the rock. "Don't get into trouble with that fellow, George."

With this admonition he left the other American lad and started back up the hill on the other side of which the huge airship had fallen to the earth.

CHAPTER IV

THE PAPER CHASE

ONCE again on the summit of the hill Whistler Morgan could overlook all the sloping pastureland bordering the pleasant road he and his friends had been strolling upon when the Zeppelin appeared; and he could view all the port and the harbor, as well.

It was no peaceful scene now. The bombing of the port had done no damage to the shipping; but there were fires burning in three places in the town, as well as on the site of the schoolhouse and where the Hun airship had fallen. No second Zeppelin had appeared from the sea; but the guarding airplanes had now gathered like vultures, floating high above the port.

Whistler did not wish to look in the direction of the schoolhouse site a second time. The shock of the destruction of all those innocent children was too fresh in his mind for him to be willing to view the spot closer. The crowd gathered about the steaming ruins were made up for the most part, probably, of the bereaved parents and friends of the victims.

In the opposite direction, up the road, where

the twisted wreck of the Zeppelin lay, the American lad could distinguish the figures of some of his friends. He hurried in that direction, and as he drew near he saw that the crowd here gathered was very much excited. The man who had previously used the shotgun was waving his weapon threateningly, and some of the other people of the countryside were shouting at the group of gray-green figures that was plainly the crew and officers of the wrecked airship.

One of these Germans—a big fellow—showed marks of a serious beating. He was the fellow, Whistler was sure, that Willum Johnson had attacked.

The giant British seaman and the *Colodia* boys were right up in the forefront of the threatening crowd facing the Germans. But Whistler saw that there was a British Naval officer and several constables in charge of the prisoners.

"Remember, my man, that you wear the King's uniform," the British officer was saying to the giant as Phil approached. "I shall have to report your attack upon this prisoner. They all gave themselves up—"

"And they were all armed—every one of them," put in Frenchy, *sotto voce.*

The officer glared at him; but it gave Willum Johnson courage to add:

"Who says they didn't try to escape? Hi got

the first bloke hout of the machine, Hi did. Then hother folks run up an' 'twas hall over."

"I saw *one* run," Frenchy declared, looking boldly at the Naval officer.

"So did I, sir," added Al Torrance.

"You mean that one of these Germans tried to run after the seaman here made his unwarranted attack upon them?" asked the officer sharply.

"Bill jumped on the first fellow out of the machine," Al said with confidence. "The second chap ran up over that ridge and disappeared."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the officer. "Here are fourteen—all that were in the crew, so their commander says."

"And Hi wouldn't believe him if 'ee swore hit hon a stack of Bibles as 'igh as a 'ouse!" cried the Coster.

Just at this junctu. . Whistler Morgan interfered. He said very respectfully to the Navy officer:

"Beg pardon, sir, but the German that escaped is over behind the hill now. One of my chums and I chased him, and——"

"Do you mean to tell me there were fifteen members of the crew of this Zeppelin?"

"I'm not sure of that. He may not have been an accredited member. I think he is a spy brought over for some purpose and dropped here."

"You know where he is?" demanded the officer.

"Yes, sir. My friend is watching him now. He had a bundle with a disguise and pistols in it. You'd never know him for a German the way he looks now."

"Horray for Whistler, fellows!" shouted Al Torrance. "Let's all go after the Heinie!"

The boys from the *Colodia* started away from the wreck at once, but the British Naval officer called after them:

"Hold on, my lads. I can't have you going alone on such a mission. If there really is a spy at large——"

"He's at large, all right, sir," Morgan interposed. "Give us Willum Johnson and we'll get the fellow, sure."

"Aye, lad!" cried the giant sailor. "We'll git 'im, dead or alive."

"You see that you get him *alive,* Bill," said the officer, sternly. "No mistake about that. I'll have to explain your pounding this fellow all up."

"Bli'me!" said Johnson, "Hi didn't begin to treat 'im rough enough."

But this was under his breath and after he had turned away to follow the four Navy Boys. The officer did not hear the comment.

By Whistler's advice they all stooped at the summit and crept over the ridge among the bushes and rocks, endeavoring to keep their bodies out of the view of anybody below on the hillside,

where Phil had left George Belding and the German spy.

"Hit's a fair chance, lads, they seed me," remarked the British seaman. "But mebbe they'd spot muh for a bloomin' cow!"

"Where's that other fellow, Whistler?" asked Al. "Belding, did you call him?"

"Yes. You ought to remember him, Torry. He was all one summer at Seacove. And say! his folks and my folks are in the most wonderful mix-up—wait till I get a chance to tell you all about it!"

The party dodged from rock to rock and from one clump of brush to another. Soon Whistler was rather surprised that they did not spy George Belding. He was not lying on the big rock where Whistler had left him.

"W'ere's your chum, lad?" asked Willum Johnson.

"I guess the spy must have moved. George would follow him," Whistler said with confidence.

"But how shall we know which way they have gone? We're no Red Indians on the trail," Frenchy observed.

"Oi, oi!" added Ikey Rosenmeyer. "It's near sunset, too."

"Don't be afeared, lad," advised the big sailor, wagging his head. "Nothing will bite yuh around 'ere."

Whistler then explained that Belding had agreed to drop bits of paper by which they might follow his trail, and this encouraged them all. Near the rock and the hollow in which Whistler himself had seen the spy change his clothes they found no sign of either Belding or the Hun.

The latter must have carried his bundle of clothing with him when he moved from this spot. It was some minutes before Ikey's sharp eyes descried the first handful of torn paper which George Belding had dropped.

"Here's the trail!" he shouted.

"Hush up, youngster!" commanded Al Torrance. "Want to tell everybody all you know?"

"And it wouldn't take him long at that—unless he stuttered," said Frenchy, pounding Ikey between the shoulders.

"Oi, oi! I forgot," explained Rosenmeyer, hoarsely. "Let up, Mike Donahue! Who are you taking for a bass drum?"

"Come on now, fellows," Whistler said, leading the way. "Keep together and try to make as little noise as possible. We don't know how near that spy may be."

He had already found the second bunch of torn paper. Torry, walking close behind him, asked: "Will you know that German if you see him, Whistler?"

"Sure. He's dressed like one of these farmers

or drovers. But he's got a goatee and a little moustache. He doesn't look German at all."

"You lads just point 'im hout to me!" grumbled Willum Johnson, walking next in line after Torry.

They got into a piece of woods after a little, finding that the paper trail led along a well defined path. Whether the German spy knew, or did not know, this part of England, he seemed to have a direct object in view, if George Belding's trail was a thing to judge by.

This wood was nothing like the ordinary woods the American boys were used to around Seacove. It was cleared out like a grove, all the dry limbs lopped off the trees and stacked in certain places for firewood, and even the hedges thinned out for the same purpose.

"Why," Al Torrance said, "we'd burn all that stuff as rubbish, wouldn't we, Whistler?"

"And *that,*" agreed his chum, unpuckering his lips, "is why firewood at home is worth twenty dollars a cord."

"Wot's that?" gasped Willum Johnson. "Four pun a cord? My heye! hit's no wonder there's so many millionaires in Hamerica Ye *'ave* to be a millionaire to live there—eh, wot?"

"Right you are, man," said Al. "Hi! where's the next bunch of paper, Whistler?"

It seemed that the trail of paper fragments stopped abruptly. The party scattered through

the wood, searching thoroughly for yards on either side of the path.

"Perhaps he ran out of paper," suggested Frenchy.

Whistler, who was ahead, suddenly came to the edge of a hollow—a steep fall of some ten or a dozen feet. He parted the bushes and peered down into this hole. Then he uttered a startled cry that brought the others to the spot on the run.

CHAPTER V

THE TRICKSTER

"Easy, boy!" Al Torrance advised, hearing Whistler's cry of surprise. "Want to give us away to that Heinie if he is in hearing?"

But Whistler Morgan, after his startled exclamation, burst through the bushes and hurried down the bank of the hollow. A figure lay at the bottom—a figure dressed in a blue smock, loose trousers, heavy shoes and a cap. The cap was pulled down over the person's face, and he was rolled sideways so that Whistler could not distinguish a feature.

There was, however, something besides these points that had caused Whistler's ejaculation and excitement.

"Cracky!" gasped Al, remembering the description his chum had so recently given of the disguise the German spy had donned. "Is that the fellow? And who triced him up that way? Looks like somebody has been ahead of us."

The other two Navy Boys and Willum Johnson joined Al Torrance at the top of the bank. They, too, saw the huddled figure below over which Whistler was standing.

"Oi, oi!" exploded Ikey characteristically. "They got him tied up ready for the spit yet."

"Is that the bloomin' spy?" growled the big British seaman. "Let me get me 'ands on 'im."

"Easy, Bill," said Al Torrance. "You know what that brass hat said about your bringing the spy in alive."

"Hi wouldn't kill 'im—now I'm cooled hoff," the ex-coster declared. "But 'ee won't get awye from hus—no fear!"

Whistler had not joined in this conversation. He turned the body over and Frenchy uttered an ear-piercing yell:

"What do you know about that?" he added. "It's George Belding!"

"Say!" growled Al. "They could hear you on the *Colodia*. If that spy is here——"

"He's got far enough away by this time!" Whistler exclaimed, swiftly getting out his knife to cut Belding's bonds.

The latter was gagged most cruelly with a stick tied between his jaws. So far had the stick been thrust into the lad's mouth that the corners were cracked and bleeding. Whistler cut away his friend's gag first of all.

"The nasty villain!" cried Willum Johnson. "'Ow did 'ee do hit?"

"Are you hurt, George?" demanded Morgan.

"I'm bumped some," admitted the other Amer-

ican lad. "But I'm hurt most in my dignity," and he tried to grin.

"The scoundrel cut your lips with that stick," said Al Torrance. "Where did he go?"

"Ask me something easier. I only know he went—and if he kept on the way he started he's a long way from here by now."

"But where are your clothes?" demanded Whistler Morgan.

"What do you think?" cried Belding. "The dirty Heinie is wearing them!"

"Good-*night!*" gasped Frenchy. "Is it a U. S. sailor he wants to be?"

"Tell us!" commanded Whistler earnestly.

"Why, you see," Belding responded, getting up now after having rubbed his chafed ankles, "it was like this: Just as soon as you got out of sight, Morgan, the Heinie began to travel. I started right after him, and he came down here into this wood. I believe I wasn't very smart—or he was smarter than I. Guess that is pretty well proved isn't it?" and Belding smiled wryly.

"I had in mind all the time that he had two pistols under this smock he wore, so I tried not to attract his attention. You can see I failed in my attempt."

"How did it happen?" Whistler asked.

"I stepped on a stick. I suppose that was what put him wise to me. Anyway, the stick cracked

I jumped behind a tree. I could see him ahead of me in the path and he did not turn his head or apparently hear the crackling stick. But he must have been sharper than I thought."

"These 'ere 'Uns," declared Willum Johnson, "is hup to all sorts o' tricks."

"He was a trickster, all right," agreed George Belding, with much disgust in his tone of voice. "I followed right along like the idiot I was, and all of a sudden the fellow disappeared. I thought he had moved faster, so I went faster."

"And then what?" asked Al.

"I came up to the tree he was hiding behind, and he stepped out and stuck one of those pistols of his right under my nose!"

"What d'you know about that?" marveled Frenchy.

"Never had that happen to you, did you?" asked George Belding. "It's the funniest feeling—believe me! The muzzle of the pistol was under my nose, but I felt it right at the pit of my stomach! I couldn't do a thing, of course. You see fellows disarm an antagonist in moving pictures without getting hurt, but I wasn't going to take a chance. I know he would have blown my head off."

"What did he do to you then?" asked Ikey Rosenmeyer, his eyes big with interest.

"He drove me before him down into this hol-

low. He had got rid of his bundle somewhere. I didn't see him drop it. His uniform, you know, Morgan."

"I see."

"And down here he made me strip off my clothes—even my shoes. I tell you, I just *hate* that Heinie."

"That's wot yuh wants to do," growled Willum Johnson. "'Ate the 'Un or yuh can't lick 'im proper."

"No fear," said Belding, nodding. "I have stored up a proper hate for them now. This fellow is the meanest of the bunch. He got out of the duds I am wearing as slick as you please—keeping me under the muzzle of his gun all the time."

"Sounds just like a wild west movie, doesn't it?" suggested Ikey.

"Nothing so good—don't think it," growled George Belding.

"Anyhow, he got these things off and made me get into them. He put on my uniform meanwhile—quick as a cat he is. You got a good look at him, didn't you, Morgan?"

"I'd know him again," declared Whistler grimly.

"So would I," said Belding, shaking his head threateningly. "But what good is that? I bet we never set eyes on the scamp again."

"My heye!" exclaimed the big British seaman, "let's 'unt 'im down."

"He's had half an hour's start," said Belding, hopelessly. "And he was going some when he started—believe me! We'd never catch him."

"'Ow do you know?" returned Willum Johnson. "Let's send these little nippers," indicating Frenchy and Ikey, "back to the bloomin' port for 'elp, hand then scour the 'ole bloomin' country."

"We'd better all go back and report," Whistler Morgan said seriously. "We fellows can't be much longer ashore, Mr. Johnson. We're due at the dock pretty soon."

"Bli'me!" exclaimed the man. "Hi've overstayed my leave already. Hin for a penny, hin for a pun, say Hi!"

But Whistler argued with him, and he became more reasonable. Now that the fumes of alcohol were out of his head he was rather a tractable fellow.

"There is going to be trouble over this," Al Torrance prophesied. "We'd better give the alarm in a hurry. That Hun must be captured before he does some damage."

"He can go almost anywhere in a Yankee uniform—if he speaks English," said Whistler.

"Oh, he speaks it all right," said Belding.

"Hif Hi could honly 'ave got me 'ands hon

'im!" groaned Willum Johnson, shaking his shaggy head sorrowfully.

But Belding had something very serious to say to Whistler Morgan as the party started to climb out of the wood to the top of the hill overlooking the port and harbor.

"No use talking about it, Morgan," he said, "but I never took my money out of my clothes. I had a couple of pounds besides silver."

"Too bad."

"And that is not the worst. I had papers and letters. Some things in the letters from my father I wouldn't want many folks to see—and especially a Hun. Father is going to take a big sum in cash with him on the *Redbird* when he sails for Bahia. Gold, Morgan—thousands and thousands of dollars in gold coin."

"Whew!"

"Some prize for a Hun U-boat! And think of my folks and your sisters aboard the *Redbird!* It's going to worry me until I know this scoundrel is captured and I get back my papers."

CHAPTER VI

WORK AHEAD

WHEN the four Navy Boys and their friends came over the summit of the hill behind the English seaport which the Zeppelin had so recently raided and where it had come to grief, the bomb-set fires in the town had become controlled. Even the conflagration at the point where the Zeppelin had fallen was now entirely smothered.

Fortunately neither the marine hospital nor the port admiral's headquarters had been hit by the Hun bombs. The first named was crowded with refugees from merchant ships sunk by the Hun submarines or blown up by floating mines. Almost daily the remnants of the unfortunate crews were brought in; for by this time the Germans had begun shelling the boats as they escaped from sinking ships, striving to carry out their master's orders, "that no trace be left" of such breaking of the international law agreed to long since by all civilized nations.

But if the hospital was not hit, damage enough had been done in all good conscience. The crowds were gone from about the wrecked Zeppelin and from the bombed schoolhouse. The shelling of

open boats at sea was not a greater crime than the indiscriminate dropping of bombs on this unfortified town; and the wiping out of that school teacher and her pupils could never be forgotten. Phil Morgan turned his eyes away from the place, shuddering as he thought of the horror.

"Let's go down to the admiral's station—there where his white ensign flies—and report about the spy escaping from us," Whistler said.

"And explain how he's dressed," Al Torrance added. "For let me tell you, that chap, speaking English and all, and dressed like one of us Yanks, will cause a lot of trouble."

"I'd like to get something decent to put on myself," grumbled George Belding.

"Tee, hee!" giggled Ikey Rosenmeyer. "You don't look any more like one of these farmers than nothin' at all!"

"Must say," grinned Whistler, "the clothes don't become you, George."

"You go fish!" snapped the unfortunate. "I hate to show up aboard and face—who's your boss, Lieutenant Commander Lang, isn't it?"

"Cracky! Yes," Al said. "And you are billed for the old *Colodia?* Say, the boys will give you a welcome!"

"How did you come to get billeted to the *Colodia?*" Whistler Morgan asked curiously. "You came over on your father's yacht?"

"No," said Belding, quietly. "I didn't say that. I joined the crew of the one-time *Sirius* because when I arrived in England your old *Colodia* was out scrapping with the part of the Hun fleet that tried to make a break."

"Oh, yes," said Whistler. "We were in that fight; but we were on the *Kennebunk.*"

"And our gun made the first hit and we sunk a Hun battleship!" cried Al.

"Huh!" scoffed Frenchy, "you listen to Al and Whistler, and you'd think their old gun fought the whole battle."

"Did you fellows really help work a gun in that fight?" cried George Belding, in amazement and admiration. Even the giant British seaman gazed at the Navy Boys with increased respect.

"We were in the fight, and we belonged to one of the gun crews," admitted Whistler. "But we are willing to agree that we did not do it all. Frenchy and Ikey were there."

Belding laughed. "Well, let's go along to the admiral's, and I'll tell you how I came to get billeted on the *Colodia.* Uncle Sam is training more men than he has boats for—yet. But the *Colodia's* lost several of her crew, hasn't she, from one cause or another?"

"Of course. And are you a 'filler-in'?" said Whistler.

"Guess so. I came over expecting to go right

aboard the destroyer, as I say. But I had to wait for her to come back from the North Sea. And there was the old *Sirius,* with a chap in command that I knew. So I got a chance to take a trip. We took out a convoy bound westward; and on the way back we had a scrap with a sub."

"Did you sink her?" asked Frenchy eagerly.

"We did something to it. The boys said they knew she was a goner. Oil and litter rose to the surface after we dropped a depth bomb. I'm sorry for her crew; but they are in bad business."

"Don't yuh be too bloomin' sorry for the filthy 'Uns," growled Willum Johnson.

"Say, Big Bill," sang out Frenchy, "don't you be so bloodthirsty. You are a regular tiger—to hear you talk."

"Don't forget them school kids down there," replied the man, shaking his head.

Whistler had hoped to put the memory of the innocents butchered by the Zeppelin out of his memory for a few minutes. He shuddered, and led the way into the head of one of the steep streets, lined on either side by white painted cottages.

The streets leading down to the harbor were so steep that Al said he always felt like putting out his hands to brace himself against the walls of the little houses as they went down.

The boys grew silent when they heard the weep-

ing and wailing from inside the houses. Here the children had lived who were so mangled in the explosion of the Hun bomb. The destruction below in the middle of the town could not have been so bad, for there were few women and children there. This was not market day.

It scarcely seemed possible that the raid should have been accomplished and done so much damage ashore three hours before. The harbor lay peacefully enough now in the last light of the setting sun. The ships of the merchant fleet, all camouflaged most fantastically, lay swinging at their moorings. There were several gray cruisers and a number of destroyers, for this was a busy port. Both foodstuffs and troops were landed here. The destroyers were all so painted that one could scarcely be distinguished from another. Only the four Navy Boys knew just where the *Colodia* was anchored.

The party arrived at the admiral's station and were stopped by the sentinel at the gate. The admiral was not at his desk, for he was out viewing the damage the bombs had done, and to interview the prisoners brought in.

But there was an officer who heard the boys' report and thanked them for what they had tried to do. George Belding gave a complete description of the daring spy who had landed from the Zeppelin. It was pretty sure that he and Whistler

Morgan would know the fellow if they ever came face-to-face with him again.

The ex-coster would have to face punishment when he got aboard his ship.

"Hit's me for the dungeon," was the way he expressed his expectation of spending some time in the ship's brig. "Good-bye, lads," he said on parting from the Americans. "Yuh're a bloomin' bunch o' sports, that's wot' yuh his. There's no manner o' doubt you Hamericans is hall right."

"And you are all right, Bill, when you are sober," George Belding said rather grumpily. "I hope I'll never meet you again when you have been indulging in liquor."

He said this with feeling; but Big Bill only grinned. "You'll 'ave to visit me haboard ship, lad," he said, shaking his head. "Wot's bred hin the bone his bloomin' 'ard to change, hand don't yuh forget hit!"

George Belding merely grunted. He was in no pleasant mood because of the "hick" costume, as Frenchy called it, which he was obliged to wear aboard ship. The ridiculous garments and shoes occasioned much hilarity when they reached the *Colodia's* launch.

"Hey! what you got there? Going to bring a cow along for him to milk?" was the jocular demand.

Isa Bopp, who would never be anything but a

greenhorn himself, no matter how long he was at sea, demanded:

"Where did you fellers pick up that farmer?"

"Farmer yourself!" whispered Ikey behind the sharp of his hand. "It's the port admiral in disguise. He's going aboard to see Commander Lang on a secret mission. Something big's coming off, Isa."

"There'll be something big come off when he shucks them shoes," chuckled Bopp.

Meanwhile Phil Morgan was explaining to the petty officer in charge of the launch just who George Belding was, and how he came to be without a uniform. Belding would otherwise have had trouble getting aboard the *Colodia,* without his papers that the spy had run away with.

The loiterers were soon brought in by the guard and the launch put off for the destroyer. It was dark when they arrived at the *Colodia.* Ensign MacMasters, the Navy Boys' very good friend, was at the gangway, and he passed Belding on Whistler's word. Phil and the new boy went at once to Commander Lang.

It was eight bells, and the anchor watch was just being mustered. There was no searchlight or signal drills on this evening because of the air raid. There might be other Zeppelins in the fog that hung over the sea.

The boys coming aboard at once swung their

hammocks and had a chance before the first call at 8:55 to visit around with their friends and swap experiences. Of course, everybody was excited over the air raid; but nobody had been in the thick of it as had Philip Morgan and his chums.

As there is no smoking allowed below the main deck after 7:30 p. m. the lads could gather on the berth deck and talk until the first anchor watch was set. Then the thrill of the boatswain's pipe called for silence on the berth deck and the boys that were not on watch or already in their hammocks prepared swiftly to be under covers when taps was sounded at five minutes past nine.

But on this night, almost immediately after nine o'clock, there was a chattering of the wireless. The boys on watch saw the messenger dash along the deck from the wireless station with the message for the commander.

A murmur passed from group to group about the main deck of the destroyer. It even seeped below, and the boys who were not yet asleep heard the whisper.

Orders! Something of moment afoot that had not been expected; for the *Colodia* was not supposed to leave port till the next day.

Whistler, whose watch it was, almost stumbled against Ensign MacMasters in the waist of the ship. It was the ensign's own fault, for he was on the starboard side.

"Hello, my boy!" he said to Phil. "Heard the news?"

"I know there is news, sir," said Whistler. "But I don't know what it is."

"You'll all know soon. We'll up anchor and sail in half an hour. Orders from the port admiral. He has got information from the prisoners that there may be another Zeppelin fallen in the sea outside. They saw her fall, and it may be possible for us to rescue some of her company."

"More of the baby-killing Heinies?" exclaimed Whistler.

"Ah, well, we have to be merciful," said the ensign. "They were obeying their orders. We must obey ours."

"But you know, Mr. MacMasters," said Morgan earnestly, "if our superiors ordered us to commit the crimes the Huns commit, there would be mighty few of us who would obey orders."

"Aye, aye, my lad," sighed the older man. "But remember we have not lived under Prussian masters all our lives. We have different teaching and different ideals, thank God!"

In ten minutes the whole ship's company was making ready for departure.

CHAPTER VII

ON THE GREY WATERS

For the most part the American destroyers on duty in British and French waters were doing patrol service, scouting over designated areas in quest of enemy submarines, meeting and escorting troop and merchant ships into port, and on occasion, when the S O S calls came, rushing to the aid of torpedoed or of mined craft.

Even during the short experience Philip Morgan and his chums had had on the *Colodia,* they had often seen the wreckage-littered waters where ships had gone down and men and women had suffered exposure in lifeboats.

The destroyer had roared through the grey seas, in fog and gale and darkness, in answer to the tragic calls for help. Never, since men went down to the sea in ships, had there been such adventure on the waves as in those years of the World War.

For never before had the shark-like submarine abounded nor the airplanes swept overhead, both carrying death and destruction. When the *Colodia* left port her crew had small surety that they would return. This present night call was a new one for them.

The crew of the supposedly wrecked Zeppelin had been possibly five hours in the sea when the captured Germans told of their comrades' fate. The British port admiral had communicated with Commander Lang within a few minutes of his hearing the tragic tale.

There was perhaps a particular reason why the order to find the wreck of the Zeppelin and her crew (if they were not drowned) was given to one of the American destroyers instead of to a British patrol boat.

After all, the Yankees could not feel the same degree of bitterness and hatred of the Hun and his works as the British sailor did. The murder of the school children and their teacher was known to every British sailor in the port. To their horror was added personal bitterness. And this order sent the *Colodia* on a mission of mercy!

"The best I can hope for them," said Morgan to George Belding, who had been placed in Whistler's watch and had donned such uniform as the master-at-arms could supply him, "is that they will all be comfortably drowned before we find any trace of the Zep. That maybe is wicked; but it is the way I feel."

"That would be better than they deserve," Belding agreed. "Just think what that spy did to me!"

He was still very much disturbed in his mind

regarding the loss of his letters and valuable papers.

"Why, you can't tell, Phil," said he, "what the Huns might try to do. If they read father's letters and learned about all that gold——"

"You really mean the *Redbird* will take out treasure to Bahia?" asked Whistler in great concern.

"Yes. More gold coin than there is any use talking about," whispered Belding. "Father knew I would be interested in all the details, so he told me."

"And my sisters and your mother and Lilian going along!" sighed Whistler.

"Nice mess, isn't it?" groaned the other. "That spy will make use of the information sure!—if he can."

"When will the *Redbird* sail?"

"Next month, some time. Of course, I'll try to send father word about this. But you know what the censor does to a fellow's letters. And to cable would be worse."

"Wait a minute!" cried Whistler. "That spy couldn't benefit very well by the information himself. He's here in England and your father's ship will sail from New York, won't it?"

"I suppose so. From 'an Atlantic port.' You know, that's as near as they would let him tell in a letter. And don't worry about the Huns not

being benefited by the information. They'll find some way. They have wireless stations along our United States coast. And every U-boat carries a wireless."

"So do our subs," Whistler rejoined. "But they are of small radius. The English coast is cleaned out of Hun radio stations."

They have 'em on the islands off Ireland and Scotland," returned Belding. "That spy is some smart chap, Phil. I'm awfully worried. I'll write father, of course, as clearly as the censorship will allow. But it may be too late. The *Redbird* may have sailed—or a U-boat may sink the mail ship."

"You don't want to lose your courage over it," advised the Seacove youth. "We mustn't expect the worst. Of course, with Phoebe and Alice aboard I shall be worried until we hear that they have arrived safely at Bahia."

"And it takes a long time for a sailing ship to reach that place from our North Atlantic seaports," responded Belding.

They talked thus in whispers while hanging to a wire stay. The *Colodia* was running without lights, every inboard lamp carefully screened, although the night was black. Before Whistler and Belding went off watch it had begun to rain, and a fierce, chill wind was blowing. The sea was beginning to kick up, and a sailor had to be

a good acrobat to get into his hammock on the destroyer.

The new watch went on deck in rubber boots and slickers, and the gun crews, who were always on duty at sea, day or night, sought such cover as they could find. It was a nasty voyage, and they were not inspired with the thought that they might be able to save the Germans' lives.

The bearings of the spot where the second Zeppelin had fallen had been given to the port admiral and by him transferred to Commander Lang with precision. It was a long run to this point, the boys knew. The destroyer could not possibly make the point indicated before daybreak.

Yet most of the younger members of the crew, whether it was their call or not, were up in season for five o'clock coffee. The excitement grew as the light became stronger and more could be seen of the gray, tossing sea.

It was a bad lookout for rescuing anybody. To put out a boat in such a sea would be a task that the hardiest of the *Colodia's* crew shrank from. Now and then a comber rose over the destroyer's rail and tried to wash her deck. But the thousand-ton fast steamer escaped most of these "old he waves" as Boatswain Hans Hertig called them.

Hertig was from Seacove, too, and was a particularly good friend of Whistler and his chums.

"Seven Knott" was his nickname aboard the *Colodia*, and the boys had had many adventures afloat and ashore in his company.

"I ain't got much use for them squareheads," Hans declared, "and after what they done back there, I dunno as these fellers, what would have done the same had they reached land, should be helped yet."

"Not much likelihood of our finding them at all," one of the other men said. "Ten hours in the water now! And the bag of the Zep is bound to fill with water and sink the whole framework. Those Heinies will be kicking about in pretty wet water."

This was the attitude of most of the crew; yet there was great curiosity among them to see what was left of the Zeppelin that had fallen into the sea. Commander Lang conferred with the navigation officer and his other chiefs. The *Colodia* had reached the spot indicated in their orders from the port admiral.

Now all they could do was to sweep in circles about the designated place and keep an extra sharp lookout.

In fact, every man who could get on deck was watching the tumbling seas for any sign of wreck or castaway. After all, as the minutes passed and nothing at all was descried where they had expected to find survivors of the Zeppelin, even the

roughest members of the crew stopped growling about "the Heinies."

It was one thing to give vent to the bitterness they felt against the Germans in speech, it was another thing to think of those fourteen or sixteen men struggling for so many hours in the icy water, and finally being drowned so miserably.

The hammock stowers had just stopped down the hammock cloths and the boys had got their mess gear preparatory for breakfast at 7:30 A. M. when there came a hail from the mast. One of the lookouts had descried something in the east. He pointed, and excitedly yelled his directions to the watch officer.

The *Colodia's* engines began to speed up. When she went her full thirty-odd knots her hull shook as though she would rattle to pieces. The life of a destroyer in such work as the *Colodia* had been doing since she was launched, can be only a few months. Commander Lang was already talking to his officers of the time when she would have to be scrapped.

Meanwhile her record would amply repay the Navigation Bureau for building her. There was no doubt of that.

Now she pounded away at top speed for the point where the lookout had seen something afloat on the tumbling seas. All through this trip, not only the destroyer's commander, but many of the

more thoughtful members of the crew, had half suspected a German trick.

It would not be outside of possibility, or probability, for the crew of the Zeppelin brought down ashore to send a rescue ship to sea into a trap arranged with the usual German ruthlessness. It was possible that there had been no second Zeppelin at all, but that the *Colodia* was steaming at her best pace to a rendezvous with a U-boat prepared to torpedo her.

Tricks quite as vile had been played before by the Hun. Commander Lang, with his binoculars to his eyes, got the spot on the sea that the lookout had observed and kept his glasses trained there. It certainly was not a periscope they saw, yet it might be some wreckage held together for the special purpose of masking a periscope.

The gun crews were at their stations and the men handling the depth bombs were ready on either side, and fore and aft, to drop the deadly explosives if it was found that the *Colodia* had run into a trap.

CHAPTER VIII

THE YANKEE WAY

THE sharp hull of the three hundred foot destroyer cut through rather than rode the waves. She was seaworthy enough, but in a cross sea like this, she rolled and dipped tremendously, as well as bucking right through the combers after the fashion of a pilot fish. One had to be well seasoned to her habit to stand such a tumbling about as the *Colodia* gave her crew.

If George Belding felt any qualms, he was able to repress them. He was a good sailor anyway, and having just come from a stiff cruise in the Bay of Biscay in his father's transformed yacht, he proved himself to be a tolerable seaman.

Belding was a manly fellow without being as rough as many of the sailors. Like the four Navy Boys, he was greatly interested by the view they all acquired very soon of the floating débris that had first been spied from the mast. The distance being so great, they could not immediately be sure whether the wreck was that of a boat or an airship. It was at first merely a blotch of darker color on the tumbling grey sea.

"Looks more like a dead whale with a framework of scantling about it than anything else," Ensign MacMasters told the boys.

"It might be a whale at that," commented Al Torrance eagerly. "They say that many a whale has been killed by depth bombs."

"Hi!" ejaculated Frenchy Donahue. "There's a flag flying from a staff. I can see it."

"No dead whale would be likely to fly a flag," Whistler said, smiling.

"Commander Lang had better have a care," grumbled George Belding. "This may be a trap, after all."

The *Colodia* steamed on at undiminished speed. The outlines of the wreckage grew clearer despite the raging rainstorms that swept now and then across the gray waves.

The vast hulk of a collapsed bag of silk cloth—it was never canvas—could have belonged to nothing but one of the German airships.

"Half sunken Zep, sure as you are a foot high!" declared Al Torrance.

"No argument on that score," admitted another of the boys. "Do you suppose any of the poor chaps can be alive?"

"'Poor chaps' is good!" growled Al. "Like Willum, the coster, I don't believe in wasting sympathy on 'the 'Un.'"

The dashing rain and spray almost blinded at

times the *Colodia's* boys, but they searched the remains of the wrecked dirigible keenly as the destroyer drew nearer.

Now and then a great wave dashed completely over the twisted framework and sprawling bag of silk cloth. And, yes! over several specks that were apparently lashed to the wreckage. These specks were bodies of men, whether dead or alive could not at first be decided with the wind driving the spindrift head-on.

Commander Lang discussed the situation with his chief officers amidships. How could they reach the wreck of the Zeppelin under such weather conditions as these? Scarcely could a boat live in such a sea!

"I'll order no boat's crew out into such a mess as that," said the commander, with a gesture indicating the gray, leaping waves. "And I hate to ask for volunteers when those people out there are what they are. It is hardly possible for the boys to think of them as human beings. They are set aside from us; they belong to another race—a race that has shown neither mercy nor compassion."

"It will have to be volunteers, if anybody," said one of the other officers. "But I've a wife and children. If I am ordered, I'll go. But no volunteering to get those Huns, for me!"

Among the crew the indications were that they

felt about the same as the officers. Said Hans Hertig:

"Who would volunteer to save them square-heads yet? Not me!"

"What would they do if they were in our place?" another of the seamen asked. "They can watch women and babies drown! Why should we worry about them?"

"Because we're Americans, I suppose," said Al Torrance gravely. "It's not done any more—not by real folks. Yankees to the rescue, old man! Somebody's got to go and pick those Heinies off like ripe blackberries off the vine."

But more than a few of the seamen shook their heads and said "Not me!"

Of course, volunteers had not yet been asked for, nor did anybody seem to know just what course should be pursued in striving to rescue the crew of the Zeppelin. Whistler Morgan and George Belding, standing well forward, looked long and earnestly at the imperiled men on the wreck, then they looked into each other's faces.

"What do you think?" Belding asked, his lips making no sound that Phil Morgan could hear, but his words easily read by Whistler.

"If the *Colodia* shoots beyond the wreck?" asked Whistler, moving his lips in the same way so that George could read what he said. "I could drift down to it with the current."

"In a boat?" asked Belding doubtfully.

"With life buoys," Whistler explained.

Belding understood the scheme and nodded. Whistler said:

"I'll speak to Mr. MacMasters."

He went aft immediately to find the ensign. Finding Belding close at his shoulder, Whistler said:

"You don't need to get into this, George. What would your folks say?"

"Just about what yours will say if you chuck your life away for the sake of a lot of Heinies," returned Belding briefly. "You can't do it alone. It will take two of us to fasten each Heinie into the buoy so he can be dragged back to the ship."

"You've got the right idea," agreed Phil, and turned to speak to Mr. MacMasters.

"What do you two chaps want to do—throw your lives away for scum like them?" was the ensign's first comment upon Whistler's proposal.

MacMasters had risen from the forecastle himself, having won his billet by hard work. He was apt to look upon most things from the sailor's standpoint. The crew of the *Colodia* had already seen enough of the despicable work of the Hun to hate almost with the intensity of Willum Johnson.

"They have to be saved, haven't they?" Whistler asked quietly and respectfully.

"But why should you do it?" rejoined Mac-

Masters, who really loved the lad and feared for his safety. "Those men over there are not worth it."

"*We* are worth it, sir," put in George Belding with earnestness. "Phil has the right idea, and I want to help him. One fellow can't do it alone, anyway."

MacMasters threw up his hands in a helpless gesture. "Of course," he grumbled, "I'll take your proposal to Commander Lang," and strode away toward the bridge.

"Whistler's suggestion was in line with what the chief officers had already seen must be done. "If those lads demand the privilege, I will not stop them," said the Commander. "They are both smart and well set-up boys. But I wish some of the older men had come before them. In a case of this kind, it's 'first come, first served.' Tell them to make ready, Mr. MacMasters. And I adjure you to take care that they have proper help."

When Mr. MacMasters brought back the word Whistler Morgan and George Belding at once prepared to put their idea into practice. But the *Colodia* had yet to steam past the mass of wreckage that had been the Zeppelin. There were nine men lashed to the half sunken framework. Feeble gestures from some of the figures showed they were alive.

As the destroyer drew so near and the sorry state of the Germans was made apparent, the Americans grew silent. There were no more curses for the Huns. The most bitter suddenly thought of the castaways in different mood. Those were dying men lashed there to the sorry wreck of the Zeppelin.

Word swiftly passed all over the ship that Morgan and Belding were about to make an attempt to rescue those of the castaways who were still alive. Al Torrance came raving to his chum and wanted to know what it meant—why he was left out of it? If Whistler Morgan was going to risk his "fool neck to rescue a parcel of Huns, (so he put it) why couldn't he be in it?"

"You can, old man," said the wise Whistler. "You are just the fellow I want to hang on to the life buoy line and pay out for me. My life will be in your hands. Catch hold here!"

Al grumbled some, but did as he was bid. Cold as it was, the two boys making the attempt to reach the wrecked Zeppelin stripped to their underclothes. The *Colodia* had passed the wreck, and now swerved so that the current would carry the two venturesome lads straight down upon the wreck.

The two buoys were flung overboard, and Morgan and Belding slipped down the ropes and plunged into the sea. The first shock of it was

tremendous. It seemed as though the water would freeze the blood in their veins and the marrow in their bones.

But they cheered each other, each diving and coming up within the ring of the buoyant life buoy assigned him. Al and others payed out carefully but swiftly. All realized how icy the waters were. This rescue—if it was to be successful—must be made in quick time.

The two rescuers whirled down upon the wreck. The framework was raised high upon first one wave and then another. There was danger of its parting and carrying away the men lashed to it. Phil Morgan and Belding knew that they had to do their work swiftly if they would accomplish the task they had set out upon.

CHAPTER IX

"SCHMARDIE"

THE *Colodia* was drifting more than a cable's length from the wreck of the German airship that had fallen into the sea. Philip Morgan and George Belding were some minutes in dropping down to the wreck, each upborne by his life buoy, the lines of which were payed out by their comrades on the destroyer's deck.

The ropes soon grew very heavy and had the ship been much further away the two boys would have found the life rings of little aid to them. However, when the waves swept them against the twisted framework of the Zeppelin, they were still held well above the surface of the sea and were able to seize parts of the wreckage.

Whistler signaled those on the *Colodia* to cease paying out. Then he turned to look up at the struggling men above his head. George Belding cried:

"All right, Phil?"

He bawled the query so loud that Whistler heard him above the noise of the sea and the creaking of the wreckage.

"Hunky-dory!" he returned. He pointed above, and Belding could easily read his lips: "Which of these Heinies shall we get first?"

One man was already letting himself down toward the rescuers. By the trimming on his uniform the American boys were positive he was an officer—perhaps the commander of the Zeppelin.

"Tell that fellow to pass down those who are injured," Whistler yelled so that his friend could hear him. "I believe he's going to try to hog one of these buoys!"

Belding put up a hand to stop the German. The latter addressed the two American lads in English.

"I am Herr Hauptman von Hausen. I am in command. Will your comrades draw me aboard in the bight of that rope?"

"Not now, mein Herr," shouted Whistler. "You've got gall to want to leave your comrades who may be helpless! Get some of them down here—and have a care that you do help them, too, or I'm not so sure that you will ever get to the destroyer at all!"

"Impudence! I shall report you to your commanding officer," declared the Zeppelin's captain fiercely.

"Believe me!" exclaimed Whistler, "that will do you a lot of good. Look out for this fellow,

George! Let's see that he is hauled in last just for that."

"I'm with you," agreed the other American. "Can you reach that young chap just above your head? I believe he's got a broken arm."

Whistler had managed to climb out of the sea and stood upon one stay, clinging to another. Now he reached up to aid the fellow George Belding had spoken of. The German was no older than the lads from the destroyer—a thin, pale fellow, his face drawn with pain, and his left arm strapped clumsily to his side.

"He's got a broken arm, all right," Whistler shouted. "When I pass him down, George, do you unbuckle his belt and fasten him with it to the ring. Then he won't be swept away, even if he has but one hand to cling with. All ready?"

"Here, you!" exclaimed Belding, addressing the "Herr Hauptmann" in no respectful tone. "Lend a hand, will you? If you don't I'll cut you adrift."

Belding had out his knife to cut a lashing and he looked as though he would carry out his threat. The Zeppelin commander slid down the stay and aided in lowering the younger German out of the wreck.

In five minutes they had him lashed as Whistler suggested to the life buoy, and the young German was on his way to the destroyer. A third inflated

ring had been floated down to the tangle of débris drifting in the rising sea. Both Morgan and Belding were aware that they must work rapidly if they would save those of the Germans who were still alive. The wreckage was shifting from moment to moment. One body suddenly plunged beneath the tossing waves, but the Americans knew that the victim was already dead.

The men beside the captain had cut themselves loose and crawled down to the level of the sea. These two the rescuers sent away clinging to one of the inflated rings, for they could both handle themselves pretty well. But they kept Commander von Hausen until the first life buoy was emptied and was sent back again.

The four bodies left above were not all of live men; the boys were sure of that. And when they had got the first quartette of castaways started for the destroyer, Belding climbed up to cut away the nearest man. He was very weak, and after he was loosened from the stays he proved to be unable to help himself.

The situation of the two boys from the destroyer was now becoming very precarious indeed. They could not hang on here for much longer themselves.

"One of us will have to go back with this fellow," declared Belding. "You take him, Phil. I am in better shape than you are."

"Who told you so?" demanded the Seacove boy. "You take him. I'll get that other fellow up there and follow you. Al and the others are floating another buoy down to us."

"No," said Belding. "I'll lash this fellow here and he'll have to take his chance until we get his mate. Those two beyond are dead, aren't they?"

"Sure," returned Whistler. "Poor things! Just think of their hanging on here for so long."

"Oh, yes," growled Belding, but with some scorn. "You can see just how much good it's done that captain."

They were close together or they could not have heard each other speak. The wind shrieked and the waves roared, making a chorus of sounds that well nigh drowned their voices.

With great difficulty they brought the second man down. Then, having lashed each sufferer to a life buoy, Whistler Morgan and Belding set out to swim beside them to the destroyer.

The waves were much higher now and the two lads were not so strong as when they had come out to the Zeppelin. They never could have reached the *Colodia* without help, and, withal, they were pretty well exhausted when they were drawn to the side of the pitching destroyer.

Cheers greeted them. The crew was generous always in acknowledging the individual bravery of its members. However, when it was all over

and Phil and Belding had been treated by the doctor and were between blankets, Frenchy was inclined to "josh" a little.

"By St. Patrick's piper that played the last snake out of Ireland!" he cried, "it will keep you broke for polish to shine up all your medals, Whistler. If Commander Lang reports this to the port admiral, you and Belding will get some junk to wear on the proud young chests of yez! And there's the medal ye got, Whistler, for grapplin' wid the depth bomb and sub chaser Three Eights!"

Whistler tossed a boot at his tormentor's head, but Frenchy dodged it and escaped from the sick bay where the doctor had ordered Morgan and Belding to remain for the time being. They were kept there with the German lad with the broken arm until the next morning, when the friends were ordered to appear before Commander Lang. The latter said with a quizzical smile:

"I hear a bad report of you young chaps on one point. The Herr Hauptman Frederich Wilhelm von Hausen says you were not sufficiently respectful to him."

"We weren't, I guess," admitted George Belding. "How about it, Phil?"

"I am afraid we did not pay sufficient attention to his High Mightiness, sir," rejoined Morgan. "You see, sir, we sent the wounded boy

over first. That captain was in too big a hurry."

"Yes. Well," drawled the commander, "I suppose I shall have to pass this complaint along to the proper authorities. But I believe I can congratulate you two lads on drawing down the United States gold life saving medal for your act.

"You, Belding, have made an excellent mark for yourself on joining the *Colodia*. We already knew what sort of metal Morgan was built of. Thank you, my lads! If the surgeon gives you a true bill, you may turn to with your watches."

The boys saluted and departed for their stations. The destroyer was making for port and the headlands were visible. But the storm had not blown over and the ship was rolling forty-five to fifty degrees. If an ordinary merchant ship rolls forty degrees her crew think that the end has come and they will be wrecked; forty degrees is ordinary for a destroyer to roll in the sea. Often moving about the *Colodia* was almost like climbing a sheer wall.

The two boys who had done so brave an act the day before were commended on all sides; but their mates' approbation took the form of good natured joking, for which both Morgan and Belding were thankful.

They heard much comment regarding the German captives from the other members of the crew. Especially did they learn certain things

about the youth with the broken arm whom they had first sent off to the destroyer from the wreck of the Zeppelin.

He was named Franz Eberhardt, and he was in the sick bay instead of being confined with the other prisoners. Hear Hans Hertig rail about him:

"That feller is a schmardie—one o' them German schmardies what you hear about. I would like to have him workin' on this *Colodia*. We would work some of the schmardness out of him yet."

"What's the matter with him, Boatswain?" demanded Al Torrance.

"Huh! He tells me the Germans ain't begun to fight yet! Sure! They will lick all the world —let him tell it. He iss one Prussian."

Phil Morgan got a chance to go down to the sick bay and interview the young prisoner. The latter knew that Morgan was one of those who had rescued him and his mates; but there was a certain arrogance about his manner and speech that was not likely to make him friends among his captors.

"Aren't you worried about your position at all?" asked Whistler, when they had talked for some time.

"Me?" repeated the German in very good English. "Why should I fear? I am an Eberhardt.

My uncle lived long in England and has friends there. I shall make friends. The English do not dare treat us Germans badly, for they know that in the end they will be beaten and we will punish them severely if they treat prisoners unkindly. Oh, yes!"

"Say!" drawled Whistler, "where do you get that stuff? You must have caught it from that von Hausen. He wanted to push you out of the way and take your place in the life buoy."

"Yes," admitted the German youth simply. "He is *Hauptman.* Why not?"

"Good-*night!*" growled Whistler. "Our officers don't do that. They would consider it beneath them to be saved before their crew."

Eberhardt, who was sitting up, shrugged his shoulders. "Yes?" he repeated. "But of course, they are not *gnädige Herren.*"

"That means 'noble sirs'," scoffed Whistler. "No, thank heaven, we do not have such a caste as that in America!"

"You have some very rich men—very rich. I have heard my cousin Emil say. He knows many of them. Many are from German blood. Of course, *when* we finish the war, they will create a caste, as you call it, in your United States. Cousin Emil says——"

"Who is your Cousin Emil?" demanded Phil Morgan more amused than angered after all,

by this kind of talk. "Is he in the States now?"

"Not yet," said young Eberhardt, slyly looking at his inquisitor. "But he is going."

"Before the war ends? Not much chance of that."

"Poof!" rejoined the German youth. "You cannot stop Emil. What he wants to do, he does. He is a great man. He has been decorated by the Emperor."

"What department does he fight in?"

"Ah, he is greater than a fighter," said young Eberhardt, shaking his head. "He goes hither and yon—where he chooses. In France, England, Italy, and now to your country, America."

"A spy?" growled Morgan.

"Call him as you like. Cousin Emil is a wonderful man. Why, to fly from our bases in Belgium to this England is nothing to Cousin Emil. He has so traveled a dozen times. But this was my first trip."

"You were not traveling with your cousin in that Zep, were you?"

"Ah, no. You say our sister *Luftshiff*—she is fallen?"

"Smashed all to pieces," declared Whistler with satisfaction. "And her crew prisoners—all but one."

"Ah!" breathed Eberhardt, slyly smiling again. "And he who escaped?"

"What do you know about him?" asked Whistler in surprise. "That fellow is a spy I bet! He was not a regular member of the Zep's crew."

"No? You saw him?"

"Yes."

"Is he a man with a very sharp eye, a moustache like our Emperor, a tiny beard here?" touching his lower lip.

"That's the fellow!" cried Whistler. "Do you mean to say he is your cousin Emil, and a spy?"

"Oh, no, my friend," chuckled the "schmardie." "Oh, no. I do not say that. I merely say that man with the little beard on his lip—a goatee, do you call it?—plays the cornet. You know, most cornet players wear the little goatee, isn't it so?"

Eberhardt laughed again and wagged his head, refusing to say more. As for thanking Whistler for what he and Belding had done toward saving his life, such a thought never seemed to enter the German youth's mind.

CHAPTER X

THE TERROR OF THE SEAS

PHIL MORGAN, on thinking over the conversation with Franz Eberhardt, was not at all sure that he should have discussed the wreck of the other Zeppelin so freely with the prisoner. Yet Eberhardt was a prisoner, and was not likely to be in a position to use any information he might have gained to benefit his nation for a long time to come. If Eberhardt's cousin was a spy, perhaps this young chap was one too.

The hint Franz had dropped about the man who had escaped from the Zeppelin that had been brought down on land, Whistler passed on, through the proper channels, to the commander of the destroyer. He could do no more than that. Possibly the man who had tied up George Belding and escaped in the latter's clothes, might be the "Cousin Emil" of whom Franz was so proud.

The *Colodia* steamed into the port at which she was stationed to find the convoy and most of the naval vessels cleared out to accompany the merchant craft. The American destroyer would be held for any emergency call and there would be no present shore leave for her crew.

Phil received a long letter, one long delayed, from his sister Alice. The whole story of how the Beldings had come to invite Whistler's two sisters to accompany them to Bahia was here set forth, and the young fellow's mind was much relieved when Alice assured him that even the suggestion of the voyage had so delighted Phoebe that she already showed improvement in her health.

Kind words from many neighbors and friends were included in the letter for the other Seacove boys. Of course, Alice did not know at the time of writing that George Belding was booked for a billet on the *Colodia*, too, or she would have sent a message to him.

No thought that the *Redbird* might come to grief on her voyage to the South American port seemed to trouble Alice Morgan's mind when she wrote to her brother. At that time it was thought all German raiders and U-boats were driven from the Western Atlantic waters.

However that might be, the Huns were active enough in the waters through which the *Colodia* plied. It was only two days after Whistler and George Belding had saved the living remainder of the Zeppelin crew when an S O S call was picked up by the port wireless station and transmitted to the destroyer. It was possible that the ship in peril was too far away for the *Colodia*

to be of service; nevertheless she started out of the harbor within ten minutes of the reception of the aero plea for help.

The weather was rough, and the ship barely dropped the headlands below the horizon at sunset. They were bound, doubtless, on a useless night trip. And yet, such ventures were a part of the work of the destroyers and must be expected by their crews.

When night had fallen there was only a pale radiance resting on the sea while broken wind clouds drove athwart a gray and dreary sky. No stars were visible. From behind the weather screen of the bridge, where the two watch officers were stationed, nothing could be seen ahead but the phosphorescent flash of waves otherwise as black as ink. These flashes, where the waves broke at their crests, decreased rather than aided the powers of vision.

The crew of the *Colodia* were by this time so well used to their work that there were few false alarms as the ship tore on through the dark seas. Such errands as this were part of the expectation—almost of routine. The destroyers at night fairly "smelled" their way from point to point.

Now and then a porpoise shot straight toward the *Colodia,* leaving a sparkling wake so like that of a torpedo that the lookout might be excused

for giving a mistaken warning. But the men knew the real thing now, and the gunners did not bang away at fish or floating débris as they had in the beginning.

"Why, even Isa Bopp has not for a long time raised a flivver," said Al Torrance, discussing this matter with George Belding and Whistler. "And Ikey has stopped straining his eyes when he's off duty. One time he would have hollered 'wolf' if he'd seen a dill pickle floating three hundred yards off our weather bow."

"That's all right," said Whistler. "But Ikey won the first gold piece for sighting a German sub when he first went to sea on this old knife-blade. He's got eyes for something besides dill pickles, has Ikey."

The crackling radio was intercepting messages from other ships—all kinds of ships. The S O S call was no longer being repeated; but the *Colodia's* officers had learned the position of the vessel that called for help at the start, and the destroyer did not swerve from her course. She roared on through the dark sea directly for the spot indicated.

"There's nothing fancy in this job, George," Phil Morgan said to their new chum. "Nothing like a good, slap-dash battle with the Hun fleet, such as we had a few weeks ago, or even chasing a Hun raider out of Zeebrugge, or Kiel. But the

old *Colodia* has had 'well done' signaled her by the fleet admiral more than once."

"You bet!" Al Torrance put in. "We've sunk more than one of the U-boats. We're one of 'the terrors of the sea,' boy—like the song tells about. That is what they call our flotilla."

"Ah! I've heard all that before," Belding said, in some disgust. "I want to see action!"

As it chanced, he saw action on this very cruise. First, however, came the conclusion of the incident that had brought them out of port, chasing a phantom S O S.

A light burning low on the water was spied about ten o'clock. It could be nothing but an open boat, and the *Colodia's* prow was turned more directly toward it. The sea was really too rough for a submarine to be awash, yet the Huns had been known to linger in the vicinity of their victims so as to catch the rescuing vessel unaware. A sharp lookout was maintained as the *Colodia* steamed onward.

The torch in the open boat flared and smoked, while the boat pitched and tossed—seemingly scarcely under command of its crew. There was no sign of any other craft in the vicinity. The signal from the attacked ship having stopped hours before, without much doubt she had sunk.

And but one boat remained!

The destroyer sped down within hailing dis-

tance of the open boat, burning signals of her own meanwhile. Getting on the weather quarter of the castaways, the latter were ordered to pull to the *Colodia*.

The boat held only nineteen survivors of the *Newcastle Boy*, a collier that had been torpedoed by a submarine. There had been a second boat, and both had been shelled after the collier sank, and the mate, who was in command of these rescued castaways, feared his captain's boat was utterly lost. Had the sea not been so rough, he said, the Germans would have succeeded in sinking his boat, too.

Whistler was on duty amidships and he overheard much of the report made by the collier's mate to Lieutenant Commander Lang and the conversation among the officers thereon.

He was particularly impressed by the inquiries the destroyer's commander made regarding the nature of the attack, the type of U-boat that did the deed, and similar details.

A close track was kept of all these submarine attacks. The methods of certain submarine commanders could usually be traced. These reports were kept by the British Admiralty and were intended, at the end of the war, to assist in identifying U-boat commanders who had committed atrocities. Those men should, in the end, not escape punishment for their horrid crimes.

This attack upon the *Newcastle Boy* had been particularly brutal. There were four wounded men in the mate's boat. If the captain's boat were lost, the missing would total twenty-six.

The *Colodia,* swinging in wide circles through the rough sea, remained near the scene of the catastrophe until morning. They discovered no trace of the sunken ship, although the mate declared she had gone down within a mile of the spot where the destroyer had picked up the survivors.

But at daybreak the watchful lookouts did spy a broken oar and part of the bow of the captain's lifeboat—its air-compartment keeping it afloat. No human being was there to be seen, and the conclusion was unescapable that the Hun had done his best to "sink without trace" another helpless boat's crew.

It was mid-afternoon, however, before the *Colodia* left the vicinity of the tragedy. There was a desire in the hearts of her crew and officers to sight the submarine that had committed this atrocity.

Finally, however, the American naval vessel was swung about for port and began to pick up speed. These destroyers never seem to go anywhere at an easy pace; they are always "rushed" in their schedule.

Having given up hope of catching the particular

submarine that had sunk the *Newcastle Boy*, the *Colodia's* lookouts did not, however, fail to watch for other submersibles. Men stationed in the tops, on the bridge, and in both bow and stern, trained keen eyes upon the surrounding sea as the destroyer dashed on her way.

Ikey Rosenmeyer and his special chum, Frenchy Donahue, were in the bows on watch. Even those two "gabbers," as Al Torrance called them, knew enough to keep their tongues still while on duty; and nobody on the destroyer had keener vision than Ikey and Frenchy.

Almost together the two hailed the bridge:

"Off the port bow, sir!" while Ikey added: "Starboard your helm!"

A great cry went up from amidships. The *Colodia* escaped the object just beneath the surface by scarcely a boat's length. Men sprang to the depth-bomb arms and the crews to their guns.

But it was not a submarine. A great wave caused by the swift shifting of the *Colodia's* helm, brought the object almost to the surface.

"A mine!" roared the crew.

The destroyer's speed was slackened instantly. She swung broadside to the menace. A few snappy commands, and two of the deck guns roared.

Instantly a geyser of water and smoke rose

from the sea. The explosion of the mine could have been seen for many miles. Had the destroyer collided with it——

"We'd have gone to Davy Jones' locker, sure enough, fellows," said Al Torrance. "Those mines the Huns are sowing through these seas now would blow up the Brooklyn Bridge. Suppose the *Leviathan,* troop ship, scraped her keel on that thing?"

There was much discussion all over the destroyer about the mine. It suggested that the submarine that had sunk the *Newcastle Boy* might be a mine-sower. That fact would help identify the submarine, for all types of German submersibles are not fitted with mine wells.

"You see how it is, George," said Phil Morgan to their new chum. "These seas around here are just as safe as a powder factory—just about! How does it make you feel?"

"Pshaw!" returned Belding, "didn't I tell you we almost caught a sub when I was out on the *Sirius?* I don't believe the Heinies have got so many of 'em, after all."

"Never you mind," said Whistler. "They've got enough if they have but one, believe me! Just think how we fellows used to gas about submarines and all that. Before the war, I mean! We never dreamed any country would use them as the Germans have."

The tone of the whole crew after the narrow escape from the mine was intense. They were on the lookout for almost anything to happen. Before mid-afternoon, while still out of sight of land, the top hailed the deck officers.

"Steamer in sight, sir!"

The position and course of the stranger was given, and immediately everybody who had glasses turned them in the indicated direction. The destroyer's course was changed a trifle, for everything that floated on the sea was examined by the Allied patrol.

Soon the high, rusted sides of an ancient tramp steamship hove into the view of all. She was a two-stack steamer, and despite her evident age and frowsiness she was making good time toward the Thames.

"Taking a chance," Ensign MacMasters said to Whistler and his friends. "That is what she is doing. She's not even camouflaged. Her owner has found some daredevil fellows to run her and will make a fortune in a single voyage—or lose the ship, one or the other. Great gamblers, some of these old ship owners."

"Gamblers with men's lives," said George Belding. "I should know. My father is in the business; but he does not take such chances as that."

"Not even with the *Redbird?*" whispered

Whistler anxiously. "I don't know about Phoebe and Alice sailing on her."

"Oh, pshaw! there's no danger over yonder," declared George. "We've driven all the Huns from the Western Atlantic."

"Hope so," returned Whistler.

Just then a cry rose from some of the men on deck. The destroyer was near enough to the tramp steamship now to observe what went on aboard of her. They saw men running about her deck. Then followed the "Bang! Bang! Bang!" of her deck guns.

The guns were aimed for the far side of the tramp—the object they were aiming at being out of sight. But the destroyer's crew knew what that fusillade meant.

"A sub! She's got a sub under her guns!" was the yell that rose all over the *Colodia*.

Swift orders from the bridge and instantly the destroyer shot ahead like a mettlesome horse under spur and whip.

CHAPTER XI

ACTION

If action was what George Belding craved, he was getting it. Everybody aboard the United States destroyer *Colodia* was on the alert as the craft leaped ahead to full speed for the spot where the rusty-sided tramp steamship was popping away with her deck guns at some object as yet not in view from the destroyer.

The merchant ship was being conned on a zigzag course, evidently in an attempt to dodge an expected torpedo. Her hull hid whatever she was shooting at from the crew of the *Colodia;* but the latter did not doubt the nature of the big ship's erratic course.

At top speed the *Colodia* rushed to the fray, and on suddenly rounding the stern of the tramp, a great shout rose from the boys ranged along the destroyer's rail:

"There she is!"

The cry was drowned by the salvo of guns discharged at the conning tower of the German submersible. not more than a thousand yards from the tramp ship. The position of the German

craft had been excellent at first for a shot at the merchant vessel; but her first torpedo had evidently missed its objective. Now with the destroyer in view, the Hun let drive a second missile and then began to submerge.

The torpedo's wake could be seen by the lookouts on the *Colodia* the instant it left its tube. The tramp vessel evaded the explosive; but the destroyer was directly in the torpedo's path.

There was real danger at this moment. Quickly swerved as she might be, it was not at all sure that the *Colodia* could escape the torpedo. Every man and boy aboard was at his station; among them Al Torrance was placed at the starboard rail. He was armed, like many of his mates, with a rifle.

As the destroyer shot across the path of the torpedo Torry fitted the butt of his rifle into the hollow of his shoulder, huddled his cheek against the stock, and brought the cross-sights of the rifle full upon the sharklike projectile.

The rifle report was almost instantaneous with the roar of the torpedo. The latter blew up not twenty yards from the destroyer's rail!

"Hi! Hi! Hi!" yelled the mates of the keen-sighted Torrance.

"Well done!" called the officer of the watch through his megaphone. "Well done, Torrance!"

The whole crew cheered again, and Al's flaming

face acknowledged their appreciation. Mr. MacMasters came quickly to wring the lad's hand in appreciation.

"Good for you, Torrance," he said. "Your name goes down on the log for that."

"Aw, she wouldn't have hit us anyway," said Al, quite overcome by so much praise.

"Never mind. It showed accurate marksmanship and good work, too. Those autoprojectiles are dangerous to leave drifting about the seas. You get a good mark, my boy."

Meanwhile the *Colodia,* swerving not a hair from her course, reached and overran the spot where the submersible had sunk. The order rang out and the depth bomb was dropped. Then the destroyer scurried out of the way to escape the effect of the deep-down explosion.

Up from the depths rose a mound of muddy water. It rose twenty feet above the surface, and the spray shot twice as high. The thundering explosion shook the running destroyer in every part. The effect of the discharge upon what was under the sea must have been terrible.

Half a mile away the *Colodia* swerved and circled, to pass again over the spot where the bomb had been dropped. The boys leaned over the rails to watch for anything in the water that might prove that the submarine had been wrecked.

There was not a bit of wreckage; but suddenly Ikey Rosenmeyer shrieked:

"Oil! Oil! Oh, bully! Oil!"

A roar of other voices took up the cry. Great bubbles of oil rose to the surface. The *Colodia* passed over a regular "slick" of fluid that could mean nothing but that the tanks of the submersible had been ripped open by the explosion of the depth bomb.

Morgan found George Belding standing beside him and looking back at the oil-streaked waves with a very serious visage.

"What's on your mind?" asked the Seacove lad.

"It seems terrible, doesn't it, Phil?" said Belding. "All those fellows! Gone like *that!*" and he snapped his fingers.

"Well," returned Whistler, "you wanted action, didn't you? Now I guess you've had enough for a while."

"I believe you," agreed his friend solemnly.

But the work and life of the boys on the destroyer was not altogether made up of such scenes and incidents as these that have been related. Just at this time the troop ships were coming across from America in great convoys and the *Colodia* sometimes had less than half a day in port between trips. Four or five hours ashore in the English port, or at Brest where the greater num-

ber of ships from America landed their freight and human cargoes, was the utmost freedom that the Navy Boys and their mates secured.

There were extra calls, now and then, like these which have been related herein. When an S O S call is picked up by shore or ship radio, every Naval vessel within reach is sure to make for the point of peril.

The life was not altogether exciting, however, for there were many days of tedious watching and waiting in which it seemed that the Hun boats had all scurried back to their bases and the patrols scarcely raised a porpoise, much less one of the "steel sharks of the sea."

At Brest, well along in the month following the introduction of George Belding to the *Colodia*, the young fellow from New York got a cablegram from his father mentioning the date of the *Redbird's* sailing for Bahia with his own family and Philip Morgan's sisters aboard.

Whether the treasure of gold coin was to be part of the ship's burthen or not, the cablegram did not state. George had written his father about his lost letters and papers and of the probability that the knowledge of the treasure would reach those Germans who would consider the ship bound for South America, and all she carried, their legitimate prey.

If information of the treasure of gold coin had

been sent by the spy from the Zeppelin to his associates in the United States, there might be already afoot a plot to get possession of Mr. Belding's gold. The boys of the *Colodia* had not heard of the capture of the spy who had disappeared in George Belding's uniform. Much as they had inquired in England, they had been able to learn absolutely nothing.

Phil Morgan had even been to see Franz Eberhardt at the port hospital where the young German was confined while his arm was being skilfully treated by the English surgeons. Later the German youth had been taken to an internment camp in one of the back shires. Before he had gone Whistler had tried to get him to talk again about "Cousin Emil." But Franz had become wary.

He was no longer acting "the schmardie," as Hans Hertig had called him. He had begun to see something of England and had learned something of the character of the English. To be a prisoner, and well treated as he was, was a much more serious situation than had at first appeared.

But he refused to say anything at all of Cousin Emil. Whether it really was Franz Eberhardt's cousin with whom the Navy Boys and "Willum" Johnson had had their adventure, the fact remained that as far as the boys knew, a German spy was at large in England. And he had infor-

mation in his possession that might possibly injure Mr. Belding and his affairs.

The Seacove boys were all now interested in the sailing of the *Redbird.* If Whistler's two sisters alone had been sailing for Bahia the others would have felt a personal anxiety in the matter.

"Wish the old *Colodia* was going to convoy that *Redbird,*" Al Torrance said. "Eh, fellows?"

"By St. Patrick's piper that played the last snake out of Ireland!" declared Frenchy Donahue, " 'twould be the foinest of luck if she was."

"Oi! oi! Ain't it so?" murmured Ikey. "And that Alice Morgan such a pretty girl! I hope that *Redbird* gets to Bahia safe."

"As far as we can hear," said Whistler cheerfully, "there are neither submarines nor raiders now in the Western Atlantic. They seem to have been chased out, boys."

This supposition, however, did not prove to be founded on fact; for on the very next occasion that the *Colodia* was in the French port, Brest, there was much excitement regarding a new German raider reported to have got out of Zeebrugge and run to the southward, doing damage on small craft along the French coast. This was before the British Captain Carpenter with the *Vindictive* bottled up that outlet of German ships.

Some denied that it was a raider at all, but a big, new submarine that was built with upper-

works to look like a steam carrier when she was on the surface. However, she had a name, it being the *Sea Pigeon,* instead of a letter and number. The whole fleet of destroyers was soon on the lookout for this strange vessel, and the American commanders offered liberal rewards to the owners of the sharp eyes who first spotted the new Hun terror of the seas.

The *Colodia* went to sea to meet a new convoy from America, "all set" as the boys said, to make a killing if they ran across the *Sea Pigeon.*

"Well, we got the *Graf von Posen,*" Ikey Rosenmeyer said, with cheerful optimism, "so why not this here *Pigeon* ship? We're the boys that bring home the bacon, aren't we?"

"Aw, Ikey!" groaned Frenchy Donahue. "Can't you ever forget you were brought up in a delicatessen shop? 'Bring home the bacon,' indade!"

CHAPTER XII

WIRELESS WHISPERS

On duty with the morning watch, just after sick call at half past eight, Phil Morgan and George Belding met right abaft the radio station. There was half an hour or so before the divisions would be piped to fall in for muster and inspection, and the two friends could chat a little.

"Well, the folks are on the sea, as we are, Phil, if the *Redbird* sailed as per schedule," Belding said.

"I sha'n't feel really happy till we hear they are at Bahia," responded Whistler, shaking his head.

"Right-o! But the *Redbird* is a fine ship, and just as safe as a house."

"But she's a sailing ship—and slow."

"Not so slow, if anybody should ask you," returned Belding smiling.

"A four-master?"

"And square rigged. A real ship. No schooner-rig, or half-and-half. Captain Jim Lowder thinks she is the finest thing afloat. Of course,

she is thirty years old; but she was built to last. Regular passenger sailing ship, with a round-the-world record that would make the British tea ships sit up and take notice. Her cabin finished in mahogany, staterooms in white enamel—simply fine!"

"I didn't know they had such sailing ships," said Whistler in wonder.

"Oh, there are a few left. The Huns haven't sunk them all. Nor have the steam craft put such as the *Redbird* out of commission. You couldn't get Captain Jim Lowder to take out a steam vessel. He abominates the 'iron pots,' as he calls the steam freighters.

"But sailing ships like the *Redbird* are kept out of the European trade if possible. Even Captain Lowder must admit that a sailing ship is not in the game of fighting subs."

"That is the way I feel. Wish your folks and mine were going south on a steamer, George."

"No fear. They will be all right," was Belding's reassuring reply.

"Just the same I'd feel a lot better if all the Hun subs and raiders were bottled up at their bases."

"By the way," said Belding, "what do you think of this *Sea Pigeon* we hear so much talk about? Think there is such a craft?"

"Why not? We know that some kind of an

enemy vessel slipped along south and evaded our patrol, leaving a trail of sunken and torpedoed ships behind her."

"But a huge submarine, with superstructure and all——"

"*That* is only a guess," laughed Whistler. "Personally, I believe this *Sea Pigeon* is a raider and no submarine at all. A submarine of the size reported would use up a lot of petrol."

"That's all right," said Belding quickly. "She could get supplies down along the Spanish coast. There are plenty of people that way friendly to the Germans."

At the moment they heard the sudden chatter of the radio instrument. Belding turned instantly to put his head into the little room. The operator smiled and nodded to him.

"Something doing," he muttered. "One of you chaps want to take this message to the com?"

"Let's have it," said Whistler, quickly, holding out his hand.

"I'd like to put on that harness myself," said Belding. "We had a wireless on the roof of our house in New York before the war. Government made us wreck it."

"Jinks!" exclaimed Whistler, waiting for the operator to write out the message received and slip it into an envelope. "Do *you* know how to work one of these things, George?"

"I know something about it," admitted Belding. "What's it all about?" he asked the operator.

"Orders for us," said the man. "You'll know soon enough. We're due for new cruising grounds, boys. But keep your tongues still till the com eases the information to all hands."

He had finished the receipt and "repeat" of the message. Whistler took the envelope and sprang away with it to the commander's quarters.

He knew by the expression on Mr. Lang's face when he scanned the message that there was something big in view. The commanding officer of the *Colodia* swiftly wrote a reply and gave it to Whistler for the radio man. Belding was still hanging about the wireless room. His face was flushed and his eyes shone.

"Do you know what it is all about, Phil?" he whispered.

"Not a thing. But the Old Man," said Whistler, "is some excited."

Rumor that changed orders had reached the *Colodia* spread abroad before muster and inspection. The usual physical drills were gone through while the boys' minds were on tiptoe. Even the order at four bells to relieve the wheel and lookout startled the crew, so expectant were they.

But nothing happened until just before retreat from drill at eleven-thirty. Commander Lang

then made his appearance. He went to the quarter and addressed the crew.

"We have been honored by an order to go freelancing after a suspected vessel, supposed to be a German raider, last and recently reported to be off the Azores," he said. "Because we were successful some months ago in taking the *Graf von Posen,* we are assigned to this work."

At this point the crew broke into cheers, and with a smile the commanding officer waved his hand for the boatswain's mates to pipe retreat.

The *Colodia* was at this time sailing within sight of half a dozen other destroyers bound out to pick up the expected convoy. After a little her wireless crackled a curt "good-bye" to her companions, and the *Colodia* changed her course for a more southerly one.

The chances, for and against, of overhauling the *Sea Pigeon* were volubly discussed, from the commander's offices to the galley, and everybody, including the highest officer and the most humble steward's boy, had a vital interest in the destroyer's objective.

To attempt to chase a ship like this German raider about the ocean was a most uncertain task.

"But if the luck of the *Colodia* runs true to form," Al Torrance expressed it, "we shall turn the trick."

"That this *Sea Pigeon* is a raider and not a

submarine, seems to be an established fact," Belding said. "Sparks got some private information from the raido station at the Azores and says the ship is a fast steamer made over from some big, fat Heinie's steam yacht he used to race before the war. She has just sunk a wheat ship from the Argentine."

"Sparks" is the nickname usually applied to the radio operator aboardship, and George Belding was quite friendly with the chief of the wireless force on the destroyer.

"George gets all these 'wireless whispers' because he has a pull," said Whistler, smiling. "If anything ever happens to Sparks, I expect we'd see George in there with his head harnessed."

"And it's no bad job!" cried Al enthusiastically. "I've often wished I could listen in on this radio stuff."

"Oi, oi! That just goes to show the curiosity of you," declared Ikey Rosenmeyer, with serious air. "It is a trait of your character that should be suppressed, Torry."

CHAPTER XIII

THE SUPER-SUBMERSIBLE

THE boys from Seacove and George Belding—but especially the last and Phil Morgan—had a second topic of daily conversation quite as interesting, if not as exciting, as that of the German raider, in chase of which the *Colodia* was now driving at top-speed into the southwest.

This topic was the fruitful one of the *Redbird* and her cruise to Bahia. If the big sailing ship had left New York on the date promised, then the Belding family and Phil's sisters would now be off Hatteras—perhaps even farther south.

"For you can believe me, Belding," Al Torrance declared earnestly, and speaking with all the sea-wisdom acquired during his naval experience, "that Captain Lawdor would not sail right out across the Gulf Stream and make the Azores or the Canaries a landfall, as he might have done before Hun submarines got to littering up the Atlantic as they do now."

"We cannot be altogether sure of his course," murmured George Belding.

"Sailing vessels hate to head into the current

of the Gulf Stream," added Whistler, likewise in doubt.

"You chaps are determined to expect the very worst that can happen, aren't you? Like a fellow going to have a tooth extracted," said Al, with disgust. "Now, listen here! It stands to reason that news of this new raider, the *Sea Pigeon,* or whatever it is they call her, was transmitted to the other side of the periscope pond. George's father and the captain of the *Redbird* would be warned before they sailed from New York of this new danger—if not afterward, by wireless. Of course the ship has a radio plant, hasn't she?"

"Of course," agreed the shipowner's son.

"Nuff said! They never in this world, then, would take the usual course of sailing ships for South America. They would not cross the Gulf Stream. It will take the *Redbird* a little longer to buck the northerly set of the current; but that is what Captain Lawdor will do, take it from me! I figure they are now about off Hatteras, following the usual course of the coasting vessels."

"Not much leeway for a big sailing ship," muttered George.

"Better hugging the shore, even stormy old Hatteras, which *we* know something about, eh, fellows?" added Al, "than dodging subs and raiders out in the broad Atlantic."

He had an old chart and was marking off the

possible course of the *Redbird* with a lead pencil.

"Good work, Torry," said Frenchy Donahue. "It's navigation officer you'll be next."

They were all five deeply interested, and each day they worked out the probable course of the sailing ship, as well as figuring the distance she probably had sailed during the elapsed twenty-four hours.

"I only hope," George Belding said, "that we overtake this *Sea Pigeon* and finish her before her commander takes it into his head to steam across the ocean to the western lanes of travel. If the raider should intercept father's ship——"

"Ah, say!" cried Frenchy, "that 'if' is the biggest word in the language, if it has only two letters. Don't worry, Belding."

That advice was easy to give. George and Whistler remained very anxious, however; indeed, they could not help being. Nor did the activities aboard the destroyer during the next few days much take their thought off the *Redbird* and her company and cargo.

They talked but little—even to their closest boy friends—about the possibility of there being a great store of coined gold aboard the *Redbird*. Just the same, this fact they knew would cause the ship to be an object of keen attraction to any sea-raider who might hear of it.

The spy from the Zeppelin had secured George

Belding's letters in which the gold treasure was mentioned and Mr. Belding's voyage in the *Red-bird* explained. More than a month had elapsed between the spy-chase behind the little English port and the sailing of the square-rigged ship from New York for Bahia, Brazil.

"And you know," George once said, "a whole lot can happen in a month. Those Germans have an 'underground telegraph' that beats anything the negroes and their Northern sympathizers had during, and previous to, our Civil War."

"Aw, don't bring up ancient history," growled Al, who tried to be cheerful, but who found it hard work when the older boys seemed determined to see the dark side of the shield. "I've forgotten 'most all I ever knew about every war before this one we're into with both feet—and *then* some!"

"Sure, Torry," put in Frenchy Donahue, "don't you remember the war of that showman who antedated Barnum—the one they say got a herd of elephants over the Alps to fight for him?"

"Oi, oi! Hannibal!" cried Ikey.

"Say! it would take a friend of yours to do that, Frenchy," said Al in disgust. "I've always had my doubts about that fellow, Hannibal."

"Besides," went on Ikey, going back to Belding's statement, "it's nothing to do with 'underground' or any other telegraph. The Germans

use wireless. If that spy got news across the pond——"

"Right-o!" broke in George, with increased good-nature and an answering smile. "But let's 'supposing.' That spy has had ample time to transmit to friends on the other side of the ocean information about the gold my father is carrying to South America."

"Why," said Whistler, slowly unpuckering his lips, "he might even have crossed to New York himself by this time—if the British didn't catch him."

"If they had caught him wouldn't we have been told?" asked Belding quickly.

"How? By whom?" demanded Whistler.

"Say!" declared Al vigorously, "the British War Office makes a clam look like it had a tongue hung in the middle and running at both ends!"

"Now you've said something!" muttered Frenchy.

"That's right! The world doesn't even know how many submarines have been sunk and captured, already yet," declared Ikey excitedly. "And we *won't* know, it's likely, till the end of the war."

"What's the odds?" growled Al.

"You got to hand it to them," sighed Whistler. "The British have great powers of self-restraint."

"You said it!" again put in Frenchy.

"Well," Ikey said, more moderately, "if that

chap that came near sending Belding here west, was that schmardie's brother——"

"Cousin!" interposed Whistler.

"Well—anyhow and anyway—Emil Eberhardt —I say!" cried Ikey, "he might have got free and gone over to New York by submarine, or someway, like Whistler says."

"What do you suppose he'd do if he wanted to get that money off the *Redbird?*" asked Frenchy, big-eyed.

"Ask us an easier one," begged Al Torrance.

"You kids are letting your imaginations run away with you," put in Phil Morgan.

But in secret the two older boys—Belding and Whistler—did not consider the idea of the spy reaching New York before the *Redbird* sailed at all impossible.

That chap with the broken arm we took off the wrecked Zep," Belding remarked once to Morgan, "told you his cousin, the 'super-spy,' was bound for America, didn't he?"

"He dropped such a hint," admitted the Seacove lad. "But pshaw! we don't even know that Franz Eberhardt referred to the fellow we had our adventure with."

"I know! I know!" muttered George Belding. "But I do wish Willum Johnson, the strong man, had got his hands on that spy."

" 'If wishes were horses——' "

"Sure! And perhaps it is all right. At any rate, father must have got my letter before he sailed, in which I told him all about losing the papers and warning him about German plotters. Of course he must have got that letter."

But this thought would have afforded them little comfort had the two friends known that the ship which bore George Belding's letter of warning had been sunk off the Irish coast by a German U-boat, and that that particular freight or mail for the United States would probably not be recovered until after the war.

The *Colodia* touched at St. Michael and then at Fayal, receiving in both ports information of the escapades of the new raider. Lastly she had been heard of far to the west.

Perhaps she was going across the ocean to prey on the American coastwise trade! This was a suggestion that put the Seacove boys and Belding on edge.

There was, however, something rather uncertain about the stories regarding the *Sea Pigeon.* Some of the merchant crews that had already met her, declared her to be a huge new submarine —a submersible that looked like a steam freighter when she was afloat, and that she was all of three hundred feet long.

"Some boat, that!" observed Mr. MacMasters. "We've seen 'em with false upperworks, boys.

But you know, even the *Deutschland* was no such submarine as this one they tell about."

Whistler put forth the idea that there were two ships working in these waters; but not many accepted this until, the day after they left Fayal, and the destroyer was traveling west, Sparks suddenly picked up an S O S from the south. The Argentine steamship *Que Vida* was sending out frantic calls for help. She was being shelled by a monster submarine two hundred miles off the port of Funchal of the Madeiras.

"This is the real thing—*Sea Pigeon* or not!" the radio operator confided to George Belding. "She's the super-sub we've been hearing about. The operator on this Buenos Aires' ship says she came right up out of the sea at dawn and opened fire with guns fore and aft. Has used a torpedo, and has upperworks like a regular honest-to-goodness steam freighter.

"There! He's off again!" he exclaimed, as the radio began to spark, and he turned back to the machine.

So was the *Colodia* off again, and at full speed, dashing away in quest of the *Que Vida* and the great submersible that had attacked her.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MIRAGE

PHIL MORGAN, coming up suddenly from the berth deck just as sweepers were piped at 5:20 in the morning, fairly overturned a smaller lad who had been straddling the top of the ladder.

"Hi, you sea-going elephant, you!" complained Ikey Rosenmeyer's voice. "Look where you are going!"

" 'Keep off the engine room hatch'," chuckled the older lad, quoting one of the emphasized orders from the manual. "Haven't you learned that yet?"

"No more than you have learned that 'Whistling is never permitted aboard ship'," rejoined Ikey, getting up and rubbing his elbows.

"Wasn't whistling!" denied Morgan.

"Well, your lips were all puckered up, just the same. And you know what old Jehoshaphat," he observed, using the nickname for the chief master-at-arms, "said that time about your doing that. It's just as bad to look like you were whistling as to do it."

"Aw, he's deaf and was afraid I was putting

something over on him," Morgan declared, and immediately proceeded to "pucker up" again in a silent tune.

It was true that Phil Morgan had received more than one demerit when first he had come to sea because of this proclivity of his for whistling. He had really been driven to the extremity of carrying a couple of small burrs under his tongue to remind him of the infraction of ship rules he was about to commit whenever he thoughtlessly prepared to whistle.

The Navy Boys had had a good many rules besides these two quoted above to learn. And not only to learn, but to obey! Excuses are not accepted in the Navy. Anybody who has ever looked through the Bluejacket's Manual will be impressed by these facts.

Every waking hour of the day has its duties for the men and boys aboard ship. Especially for the apprentice seamen class to which Whistler and his friends belonged. Their "hitch" was for four years, or until they were twenty-one. And the more they learned and the higher they stood in their various classes, the better their general rating would be if they enlisted for a second term.

This last was their intention and expectation. They were by no means cured of their love for the sea or their interest in the Navy by the hard experiences they had suffered.

For that Philip Morgan and his chums had been through some serious experiences since the war began could not be overlooked. But they were just the sort of lads to enjoy what some people might consider extremely perilous adventures.

The daily routine of duty aboard the *Colodia* at times seemed tedious; but the Navy Boys managed to stir up excitement in some form if routine became too dull. In fact, the two younger chums, Ikey Rosenmeyer and Frenchy Donahue, were inclined to be venturesome and at times they got into trouble with the authorities.

This fact occasioned Whistler at this early hour to wonder what Ikey was doing at the head of the berth deck ladder. This was not the younger lad's watch. He caught Ikey by the arm and led him to the rail. They were careful not to lean on the rail or on the lifelines, for that was against orders.

"What are you watching here for, anyway?" the older lad demanded.

"For the sun," grinned Ikey.

"What you giving me? You don't suppose the sun has forgotten to rise, do you?"

"Dunno. Haven't seen him yet."

"It isn't time."

"Well, I'm keeping my eyes open," said Ikey with twinkling eyes but serious face.

"Shucks! What's the game, anyway?" demanded Whistler.

"Why," said Ikey, "the sun went down so blamed sudden last night that I wasn't sure whether it really set same as usual, or just that the old fellow went out of business entirely. Didn't you notice it?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the older lad, seeing the light, if not the sunlight. "Don't you know that we are getting nearer and nearer to the tropics, and that there is mighty little twilight there?"

"No!"

"Fact. Night falls very suddenly."

"'Sudden!' You said it!" ejaculated Ikey. "It's enough to take your breath. I told Frenchy I wasn't sure the sun would ever come up again."

The fingers of Dawn were already smearing pale colorings along the eastern sky. The two boys watched the growing day wonderingly. No two sunrises are alike at sea, and Whistler was never tired of watching the changing sky and ocean.

This was the morning following the S O S call regarding the attack of the super-submarine on an Argentine ship. The *Colodia* was pounding away at a furious rate toward the place which the wireless had whispered; but the spot was still some leagues away.

It was a cloudy morning, the clouds being all

around the horizon with the promise of clear sky overhead. Windrow upon windrow of mist rolled up above the horizon. The light in the east was half smothered by the clouds.

"I guess the old sun will get here on the dot," said Whistler, in a mind to turn away to go about his duties.

"I'm going to wait for him," said Ikey stubbornly. "No knowing what tricks he might play. Hi! Look there!"

Whistler, as well as Ikey, suddenly became interested in what they saw upon the western sky. There was a stratum of cloud floating there, beneath which the horizon—the meeting line of sky and sea—was clear. The spreading light of dawn imparted to this horizon line a clearness quite startling. It was as though it had been just dashed on with a brushful of fresh paint.

The floating cloudland was pearl gray above and rose pink beneath; and that streak of "fresh paint" on the horizon line separated this cloudland from the dull blue water.

The sun would soon pop up above the eastern sea line, despite Ikey's pessimism, and his coming rays were already touching lightly the clouds above.

"Look at that! Isn't it great?" breathed Whistler. "Why, you can just about see through that cloud. It doesn't seem real."

"Clouds aren't supposed to be very solid," scoffed Ikey, unappreciative of the poetry in his mate's nature. "Only air and water."

"Huh! Two of the three principal elements," snapped Whistler. "Where's your science, smart boy? And that plane of cloud——"

"Looks just like the flat sea below it," suggested Ikey, his interest growing.

"You're right, it does!" admitted Whistler. "See! I believe that cloud is a reflection of the sea beneath. I bet it isn't a cloud at all!"

"Then I guess I was right," chuckled Ikey. "Nothing very *real* about it, is there?"

Mr. MacMasters came forward along the *Colodia's* deck just as Ikey made this reply. He addressed the two friends smilingly:

"What is all the excitement, boys? Haven't spotted a submarine, have you, Rosenmeyer?"

Whistler turned to the ensign and waved a hand toward the phenomenon in the west.

"What do you think of that out there, Mr. MacMasters?" he asked.

"I am not sure, but I think we are being vouchsafed a sight not often noted at sea—and at this hour. It looks like a mirage."

"Oi, oi!" murmured Ikey. "I understand now why it looks so funny."

Whistler said: "Then that is a reflection of the sea up there in the air?"

"Hanging between sea and sky, yes," said the ensign. "A curious phenomenon. But not, in all probability, a reflection of the sea directly under that cloudlike vision."

"No, sir."

"Probably a reflection photographed on the clouds of a piece of the ocean at a distance—just where one could scarcely figure out even by the use of the 'highest of higher mathematics', and the ensign laughed.

"A mirage," repeated Whistler. "Well, I never saw the like before."

"It looks just like a piece of the ocean, doesn't it?" said Ikey eagerly. "But there are no ships——"

He broke off with a startled cry. Mr. MacMasters and Whistler echoed the ejaculation. Everybody on deck who had paid any attention to the mystery in the sky showed increased interest.

Rising slowly and distinctly upon the reflective surface of the reflected sea was an object which the onlookers watched with growing excitement and wonder. It was the outlines of a ship—but not an ordinary ship!

It had upperworks and the two stacks of a steam freighter. It was of the color of the sea itself—gray; yet its outlines—even the wire stays—were distinct!

The sea shown in the mirage had been absolute-

ly empty. Now, of a sudden, this ghostly figure had risen upon it. Whistler Morgan caught Mr. MacMasters by the arm. He was so excited that he did not know he touched the officer.

"Look at it! Do you know what it is?" he gasped. "That's a submarine—a huge submarine. She's just risen to the surface."

"It's the sub we're looking for!" cried Ikey, hoarsely. "My goodness, see it sailing up there in the sky!"

CHAPTER XV

COMBING THE SEA

SUDDENLY the red edge of the sun appeared above the eastern sea line. He had not forgotten to rise! For an instant—the length of the intake of the breath the two astonished boys drew—the mirage painted by nature against the western sky was flooded with the rising glory.

Then the wonderful picture was erased, disappearing like a motion picture fade-out, and there no longer remained any sign of the startling vision in the sky, save a mass of formless and tumbled cloud.

"What do you know about that?" murmured Ikey Rosenmeyer, in amazement.

"You'll never see the like of it again, boys—not in a hundred years," Ensign MacMasters said with confidence. "That was a wonderful mirage!"

"But, Mr. MacMasters," cried Whistler Morgan, "that vision was the reflection of something real, wasn't it? An actual picture of a part of the sea?"

"So they tell us."

"Where do you suppose that piece of water lies?" demanded the youth eagerly.

"I have no idea. 'Somewhere at sea'! It may be north, east, south, or west of the *Colodia's* present position. As I tell you, there is no means of making sure—that I know anything about," he added, shaking his head.

"Oi, oi!" exclaimed Ikey. "Then we don't know any more than we did before where that super-submarine is."

"If that was a picture of her," said Whistler thoughtfully.

"It is truly 'all in the air', boys," laughed Ensign MacMasters. "We saw something wonderful. Every mirage is that. But it is a mystery, too."

"Maybe that wasn't the picture of the submarine, after all," Ikey suddenly suggested. "Maybe that was the mirage of a real freighter we saw. Two stacks and as long as this old destroyer, I bet! Maybe it only looked as though it rose from the sea."

"I'd wager money on it's being a picture of a huge German submarine," said Whistler with confidence.

"Why so sure, Morgan?" asked the ensign. with curiosity.

"You couldn't see the water pouring off her sides as she came up in that mirage," scoffed Ikey.

"No; but another thing I did notice," Whistler declared, answering both the doubting ones. "She had no flag or ensign flying!"

"Good point!" cried Mr. MacMasters.

"If she had been a regular steamship, no matter what her business might be, she would have shown at least a pennant. And we would have seen it fluttering, for there is a good breeze."

"Right, my boy," admitted Mr. MacMasters. "I must report to the chief. But, of course, we can have no surety as to the direction of the craft, nor of her distance from us."

The mirage caused considerable excitement and a good deal of discussion aboard the destroyer. Aside from the more or less "scientific" explanations offered by the old-time garbies in the crew, Ikey Rosenmeyer suggested one very pertinent idea: As he had sighted the ship which two other witnesses agreed was a submarine, was he not entitled to the twenty-dollar gold piece which was Commander Lang's standing offer for such a discovery?

"Catch Ikey overlooking any chance for adding to his bank account," Al Torrance declared. "Why, he's got the first quarter he ever earned and keeps it in a wash-leather pouch around his neck."

"Bejabbers!" agreed Frenchy in his broadest brogue, "an' that's the truth. Did yez iver see

the little flock of trained dimes Ikey's got? Wheniver they hear the spindin' of money mintioned, they clack in Ikey's pocket as loud as a police rattle."

"You certainly can stretch the truth, Frenchy," admonished Belding. "Truth in your facile fingers becomes a piece of India rubber."

"Gab, gab, gab!" ejaculated Ikey, seriously. "It doesn't prove anything. I want to know if I am going to get the twenty? I saw the submarine first."

"A mirage," scoffed Frenchy.

"That's all right. It was a reflection of a real ship Mr. MacMasters said so. If I'd seen a submarine picture in a looking glass, rising right off yonder," and he pointed over the rail of the destroyer, "wouldn't I have yelled, 'There she blows!' and got the double-eagle?"

"But you gave no alarm," grinned Al. "Did he, Whistler?"

"I guess he did call the attention of an officer to it," Whistler responded, with great gravity. "Are you going right up to the Commander with your claim, Ike?"

While the boys and the rest of the crew were joking about the mysterious submarine, the officers of the *Colodia* were seriously engaged in discussing the immediate course of the destroyer. They were under orders to find the *Sea Pigeon*,

a very fast raider; but they could not refuse very well to try to pick up this big submersible, if she could be overtaken.

The wireless messages from the *Que Vida* had ceased hours before. That afternoon they sighted a regular flotilla of small boats on the quiet sea and knew at once that the submarine had again been at work. This time, however, the Germans had been more merciful than usual to the crew of the sunken ship.

Nevertheless the two life crafts and four boats were a long way from either Fayal or Funchal. The sea was quiet, but the German submarine commander did not know it would remain so. He had gone directly contrary to international law in deserting these people.

They proved to be the crew and passengers of the *Que Vida,* more than twenty-four hours in the boats. The captain had been carried away, a prisoner, by the huge submarine that had attacked the steamship from Buenos Aires.

The story of the chief officer of the lost ship was illuminating. The *Que Vida* might have escaped the Germans, being a fast vessel, had it not been for the fact that the former appeared to be a merchant ship, and flew a neutral flag, as did the *Que Vida.*

This enabled the submersible to get within gunfire range. Suddenly she revealed her guns fore

and aft and threw several shells at the Argentine vessel. The latter was then so close that she was obliged to capitulate immediately.

The German then ran down nearer and ordered her victims to abandon ship within half an hour. She sent a boat for the captain of the merchant vessel.

When the boats and rafts were afloat, a boatload of Germans on their way to put bombs aboard the *Que Vida* stopped and pillaged each boatload of victims, taking their money, jewelry, any other valuables they fancied, and especially pilfering the woolen garments of both men and women.

The *Que Vida* carried some coin and her captain was evidently made to tell of this. The Germans searched the ship before putting the time bombs in her hold.

"Then, Señores," said the chief officer, in concluding his story, "when the poor *Que Vida* was sunken, the great submarine steamed away with Señor Capitan di Cos. Perhaps they have killed him.

"But we—Well, you see us. That gr-reat submarine is the most wonderful ship. I would not myself have believed she could submerge did I not see her go down with my own eyes not a mile away from our flotilla.

"And three hundred feet long she is, I assure

you! As long as this destroyer, Señores. A so wonderful boat!"

"Once we drop a depth bomb over her, we'll knock her into a cocked hat, big as she is," growled one of the *Colodia's* petty officers in Whistler's hearing.

"And the captain of the Spanish ship—what of him?" murmured the Seacove lad.

The taking aboard of the wrecked ship's company caused considerable excitement on the destroyer. These torpedo boat destroyers do not have many comforts to offer passengers, women, especially.

"Cracky, Whistler!" observed Al Torrance to his chum, "there are girls come aboard the old destroyer. What do you know about that?"

"Well, the Old Man couldn't very well leave them to drown, could he?" responded Morgan gravely.

"Spanish girls, too. One is a beauty; but the other is too fat," said Frenchy who claimed to be connoisseur regarding girls and their looks.

"Hold him, fellows! Hold him!" advised Ikey, sepulchrally. "He'll be off again, look out!"

"Aw, you——"

"Don't forget how he fell for that Flora girl when we were back there in England."

"Shucks!" said Belding laughing. "Flora was the goddess of flowers."

"Ah," said Ikey, shaking his head, "you don't know Mike Donahue. He'll call this Spanish girl a goddess, yet. You just see."

The *Colodia,* however, was driven at top speed for the nearest port, there to be relieved of the shipwrecked company from the Argentine steamship. So the susceptible Frenchy was soon out of all possible danger.

There was a keen desire, on the part of both the destroyer's crew and officers, to overtake the craft that had brought the *Que Vida* to her tragic end.

It was well established now that the big submarine and the *Sea Pigeon* were two different vessels, though they might be working in conjunction. But either or both of the German craft would be welcome prey to the United States destroyer. The latter continued her tedious work of "combing the sea" for these despicable enemies.

CHAPTER XVI

STATIONS

SINCE sailing out of Brest and before receiving her special orders by wireless telegraph, the *Colodia* had made no base port where the crew could receive either mail or cablegrams. Two weeks and more had passed. Philip Morgan and George Belding had no idea where the *Redbird* was, or whether or not their relatives were safe.

"The fate of a ship at sea is an uncertain thing at best," Phil Morgan said seriously to his friend, "in spite of the old salt's oft-repeated prayer: 'Heaven help the folks ashore on this stormy night, Bill!' "

"Don't joke about such serious matters," Belding replied. "Wonder how far the folks have got toward Bahia?"

"Well, you know where we stuck the pins in the chart today, boy?"

"To be sure. But we don't really know a thing about it."

"Courage!" urged Whistler. "We are just as likely to be right in doping out the *Redbird's* course as not."

"It's the confounded uncertainty of it that gets me," said Belding bitterly, and then changed the subject.

Interest in the *Colodia's* search for German raiders and submarines did not flag even in the minds of these two members of her crew. For several days, however, the destroyer plowed through the sea, hither and yon, without picking out of the air a word regarding either the *Sea Pigeon* or the huge submarine which some of the boys believed they had surely seen in the mirage reflected against the morning sky.

The detail work of a naval vessel at sea even in wartime, unless something "breaks," is really very monotonous. Drills, studies, watch duties, clothes washing, deck scrubbing, brass polishing. All these things go on with maddening regularity.

Every time the wireless chattered the watch on deck started to keen attention. But hour after hour passed and no word either of the German raider or the big submarine was caught by Sparks or his assistants.

Yet there was a certain expectation of possible action all of the time that kept up the spirits of the men and boys of the destroyer. At any moment an S O S might come, or an order from the far distant naval base for immediate and exciting work.

The *Colodia* and her crew were supposed to be ready for anything—and she was and they were!

The daylight hours were so fully occupied with routine detail that the boys made little complaint; but during the mid-watch and the first half of the morning watch when the time drags so slowly, the crew sometimes suffered from that nervous feeling which suggests to the acute mind that "something is about to happen."

On this particular night—it was mid-watch—things were going very easily indeed on the *Colodia*. It was a beautiful tropical night, with a sky of purple velvet in which sparkled more diamond-stars than Whistler Morgan or George Belding seemed ever to have seen before.

They were lying on the deck, these two, and gazing lazily skyward, it not being their trick on lookout. The *Colodia* was running as usual with few lights showing; but not because it was supposed that there was any other craft, either friendly or of the enemy, within miles and miles of her course.

They lay within full hearing of the radio room. Suddenly the wireless began to chatter.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Whistler, seizing his friend's sleeve. "That isn't a call for you, George."

"I've got so I jump everytime I hear it," admitted Belding, sinking back to the deck.

The messenger soon darted for the commander's cabin. It was no immediate order or signal for help, or he would have first hailed the bridge. But soon Mr. Lang's orderly appeared with a message for the officer of the watch.

There were a few whispered words at the break of the bridge. Then the officer conning the ship gave swift directions for her course to be changed and signaled the engine room as well. Almost immediately the pace of the destroyer was increased.

"I wonder what's in the wind?" murmured Whistler.

"I'm going to see if I can find out," said Belding, rising again.

He went around to the door of the radio room. Sparks himself was on duty. He sat on the bench with the helix strap and "eartabs" adjusted. He had just taken another message, but it was nothing meant for the commander of the *Colodia*.

"That's the second time to-night, George," he said, removing his head-harness. "I don't know what to make of it."

"What's the matter, sir?" asked the young fellow.

"Why, I guess it's static. Nothing more, I suppose. Yet it is a regular 'ghost talk.' I can almost make out words."

"Goodness! What do you mean?" asked the young fellow, mightily interested. "I never heard of 'ghost talk', though I know 'static' means atmospheric pressure."

"Pah! It means electricity in the air that we can't wholly account for," said Sparks. "But this——"

"What?"

"Why, I tell you, George; twice to-night I have almost caught something that seemed to be a message in one of our codes and tuned to this length of spark. But I can't really make head nor tail of it."

"That wasn't what you just sent aft to the Old Man?"

"Shucks! No! I'll give you a tip on that, young fellow," and the radio man smiled. "We've been zigzagging across the steamship routes, but now you will notice that we have an objective. That message was from Teneriffe in the Canaries. That big sub has been seen down that way."

"Bully!" exclaimed Whistler, who had come to look into the room over his friend's shoulder.

"Oh, that you, Whistler? Well, there is nothing secret about it. But this confounded 'ghost talk'——"

"Sounds interesting," Whistler said.

"I'm puzzled. I hope I'll catch it again. It

is just as though somebody—a slow operator, regular ham—was trying to put something over and couldn't quite do it. Funny things we hear in the air, anyway, at times."

He went back to his machine, grumbling, and the boys came away after a bit. The news that the super-submersible had been heard of again was something to talk about, at least, and served to keep them awake through the rest of the watch.

In the morning the news that the German submarine was again active in a certain part of the ocean to the southward became generally known. It was likely that the strange and threatening craft, which plainly could make longer cruises than most submarines, had been sent forth to prey upon food ships from South America.

She expected to lurk along steamship lanes, like a wolf crouched in the underbrush beside a forest path; and like that wolf, too, she was relentless. Yet, her treatment of captured ships thus far had been more humane than most, as shown by her use of the *Que Vida's* crew and passengers.

"Still, she's a regular pirate," Whistler Morgan said in speaking of this. "See how her men robbed those poor sailors, and even the women."

"Ah, you said something then, boy!" Al Torrance agreed.

"I wonder," George Belding said reflectively, "if the war should end suddenly, and some of these U-boats are out in the various seas, if their commanders won't become veritable pirates?"

"How's that?" cried Frenchy Donahue. "It's pirates they are already!"

"But to go it on their own hook," put in Ikey. "I see what Belding means. Just think of a new race of buccaneers! Wow!"

"Begorra!" murmured the Irish lad, his eyes shining, "they might infest certain seas like the old pirates of the Spanish Main."

"I hope you see what you've started, George," growled Whistler with mock anger. "Those kids are off again."

The friends from Seacove were not alone excited by the renewed chase of the super-submersible. That day, too, there were two messages about the German craft. She had sunk a small freight boat and a fishing sloop. It was evident that she had run somewhere for supplies, and had now come back to the island waters.

How many Canary fishermen's sloops and turtle catchers she sank during the next few days will never be known. Mark of such vessels could not be taken until their crews rowed ashore —if they were fortunate enough to get to shore. The tales the *Colodia* got by wireless, however, showed that the Germans were robbing all crews,

as they had the people from the Argentine ship.

From these shore reports, it seemed that the huge submarine was circling about the steamship lane again, boldly attacking everything that came in her way; but it was not until next day that the destroyer got out of the air a *bona fide* call for help. This was from the radio of the British steamship *Western Star* bound up the Cape of Good Hope.

She had merely time to repeat her S O S signal when her spark was cut off. Doubtless the radio plant of the freighter was destroyed by shellfire.

She had, however, given the *Colodia* clearly her situation, and the United States destroyer started upon another of those remarkable dashes for which she and her sister ships were originally built.

There was a chance that they might reach the spot where the *Western Star* was being held up before the submarine could get away; and the *Colodia's* crew was at stations, ready for what was coming.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SPITFIRE

THAT was a great race, as the boys declared. The engines of the *Colodia* seemed to pick her right up and fling her onward over the sea.

They passed no other ship, and after the breakdown of the *Western Star's* wireless, they got but vague whispers out of the air, and nothing at all about the huge German submarine that was attacking the British freighter.

The lookout tops were filled with excited men and boys; every member of the crew was on the alert. Tearing on through the calm sea, the destroyer reeled off the miles as fast as ever she had since her launching.

Two hours passed. Keen ears distinguished intermittent explosions from a southerly direction. Then a smudge of smoke appeared on the horizon, as though a giant's thumb had been smeared just above the sea line.

"There she is!" went up the cry from the destroyer's crew.

Their eagerness was increased, were that possible. As the cloud of smoke grew, they were all aware that it was from a ship in flames. For

some reason the submarine had not torpedoed the freighter, but had set her aflame with fire bombs.

Had the crew of the steamship been given a chance to escape? That question was really the mainspring of the Americans' desire to reach in such a hurry the scene of the catastrophe.

There was the thought of vengeance, too. If they could but overtake the German pirates and punish them as they deserved!

"It is all very well," said Belding, "to put forth the excuse that these Heinies only do what they are ordered to do. But how many of us Yankees, for instance, would obey our officers if they ordered us to commit such fiendish crimes as these submarine crews do, right along?"

The chance that the German submarine would remain in the vicinity of the freighter till she sank, was not overlooked by the commander of the *Colodia*. All on board were urged to keep their eyes open for the first sign of the enemy.

But it was the refugees from the *Western Star* that the destroyer first raised—a flotilla of small boats being pulled steadily to the eastward where lay the islands surrounding Teneriffe.

The *Colodia* kept away from the survivors, fearing that she might draw the fire of the submarine and that thereby the safety of the small boats would be endangered.

The *Western Star* was a roaring furnace, from

stem to stern. The smoke and flame billowed out from her sides, offering a picture of devastation that was fairly awe-inspiring.

But the sea immediately about the burning ship, as far as the *Colodia's* crew could see, was quite empty. There was no sign of the enemy submarine.

A signalman called to the bridge, flagged the survivors, and a man arose in the leading boat to answer. The Americans made out that the German submarine had been in the vicinity until within a very few minutes. She had but recently disappeared beyond the burning steamship, but had not at that time submerged.

Commander Lang gave orders for a dash around the stern of the *Western Star*. It was hoped that the approach of the destroyer might have escaped the notice of the submarine's commander.

Suddenly there was heard an explosion of a shell in the hull of the burning ship. A great balloon of smoke belched forth and the craft shook from bow to stern. It was evident that the Germans were getting impatient and wished the big freighter to sink.

The gunners of the destroyer were at their stations. There was a chance that they would get a shot at the submarine before she could submerge.

The *Colodia* roared on, rounding the stern of

the doomed ship. Another shell burst within her fire-racked hull; a second explosion followed, and the hull fairly fell apart amidships!

Then the American destroyer dashed into view of the enemy. The big submarine lay only two cable lengths from the sinking ship, all her upper works visible to the excited Americans. Even her conning tower was open.

She really did look like a small freighter, even at that distance. She had collapsible masts and smokestacks, and there were more than a dozen men on her deck. It would take some time to submerge such a craft. Plainly the Germans had not apprehended the approach of the American destroyer.

"Hurrah, boys!" yelled one of the petty officers, "we're going to take tea with Heinie!"

A roar of voices went up from the decks of the destroyer in reply to this cheer. A gun fore and aft spoke; both crews had been ordered to fire at the same object. That was the open conning tower of the submarine.

If ever American shells fell true, those two did! Right at the start the submarine's chances for escape were made nil. The conning tower was wrecked and the craft could not safely submerge.

But she could fight. Her gunners turned their weapons on the destroyer, and the shells began

to shriek through the upperworks of the fast naval ship. There were several casualties aboard the *Colodia* within the first few minutes.

But the submarine's most dangerous projectiles, the auto-torpedoes, could not be successfully used. As the destroyer swept past, the Germans sent one of these sharklike things full at her. But the *Colodia* darted between the submarine and the flaming ship, and the projectile passed her stern, landing full against the side of the *Western Star.*

The reverberating crash of the explosion was enough to wreck one's eardrums, so near was it. But all the time the destroyer was giving the crippled submarine broadside after broadside of guns; the upperworks of the German craft were fast becoming a twisted mass of wreckage!

Again and again the Americans' guns swept the fated submarine. But the latter was a spitfire. Behind armored fortresses her men fired her guns with a rapidity that could but arouse the admiration of the boys on the *Colodia.*

"Got to hand it to the Heinies!" yelled somebody. "They have bulldog pluck."

"Put a shell where it will do some good, boys!" begged one of the officers. "We haven't landed a hit in her 'innards'—and that is where the shells tell."

"My goodness!" gasped Whistler, working be-

side Al Torrance on one of the forward guns, "*that* shell told something—believe me!"

The shot he meant seemed to have exploded under the deck of the submarine. Yards upon yards of the armorplate was lifted and splintered as a baseball might splinter a window.

The destroyer was rounding the submarine at top speed. Volley after volley was poured into the rocking German craft. One shell wiped out a deck gun and all the Germans manning it. The slaughter was terrible.

And yet her remaining guns were worked with precision—with desperate precision. She could not hold the range as the Americans did, but her crew showed courage as well as perfect training. The position of the submarine was hopeless, yet they fought on.

Sweat was pouring into Phil Morgan's eyes as he worked with his crew members over the hot gun. The sun was scorching, anyway; it was the very hottest place he and Al Torrance had ever got into, counting the big fight when they were with the *Kennebunk,* and all!

The destroyer received very little punishment. If the submarine did fight like a spitfire, her shells accomplished little damage.

The Americans saw the big burning steamship fall apart in the middle and sink after the torpedo struck her. Great waves lifted their crests over

the spot, and it was at this time the submarine was put in the greatest danger.

The spreading billows caught the helpless submersible and tossed her on their crests. Those on the *Colodia* saw the Germans running about the deck like ants about a disturbed ant hill. Then a huge wave topped the ship and broke over her!

A cheer started among the crew of the destroyer. But it was quenched in a moment. When the great wave rolled past they saw that the submarine had been flung upon its side and that it was sinking.

"She's going down, boys! She's going down!" cried George Belding. "Don't cheer any more—now."

Indeed the awful sight completely checked cheering. It is all right to fight an enemy; it is another matter to see that enemy sink beneath the waves.

And the strangeness of this incident impressed the lads seriously as well. The submarine's own act had sunk her. She had been overborne by a wave from the sinking of the freighter.

"She brought about her own punishment," remarked Whistler, voicing the general opinion of the crew of the American destroyer. "In other words, it was coming to them and they got it!"

CHAPTER XVIII

"GHOST TALK" AGAIN

THE *Colodia* was put about, and at reduced speed approached the spot where the submarine had gone down. There was very little wreckage on the surface of the ocean; but several black spots seen through the officers' glasses caused two boats to be hastily launched and both were driven swiftly to the rescue of the survivors of the German craft.

Morgan was in one of these boats. All through the fight he had thought of the Argentine skipper, Captain di Cos of the *Que Vida*. The possibility of his still being aboard the submarine worried the American lad. If there were prisoners, they had gone down with the enemy craft.

These were the fortunes of war; nevertheless, that the unfortunates should be lost with the members of the German crew, was a hard matter. Only three survivors were picked up, and one of them, with his arm torn off at the socket, died before the boats could get back to the destroyer.

The two were Germans. Questioned about possible prisoners aboard the submarine, they

denied knowledge of them. Yet it was positive that Captain di Cos, at least, had been carried away by the German craft when the *Que Vida* was sunk.

Later some information was gleaned from the two prisoners brought back to the *Colodia*. The super-submarine had been known as the One Thousand and One. She was the first of a new type of subsea craft that the Germans hoped to use as common carriers if they won the war.

According to the story told by the prisoners—especially by one who was more talkative than his fellow—the huge submarine had a crew of sixty men, with a captain for commander, a full lieutenant and a sub-lieutenant. She was fully provisioned and carried plenty of shells. Her commander's desire to save torpedoes, their supply of which could not be renewed nearer than Zeebrugge or Kiel, was the cause of the submarine being caught unaware by the destroyer.

Had the *Western Star* been sunk at once by the use of a torpedo, the underseas boat would have been far away from the scene when the American ship arrived. It was an oversight!

"And it is an oversight her commander can worry about all through eternity," Mr. MacMasters growled, in talking about it with the boys he took into his confidence now and then. "It is my idea that that big sub could get stores and oil

without running home to her base; but she could not get torpedoes."

He did not explain further what Commander Lang and his officers suspected. But the German prisoners had been interrogated very carefully along certain lines, especially regarding that German raider called the Sea Pigeon for which the *Colodia* had really been sent in search.

The big submarine had taken considerable treasure and valuable goods from the vessels she had sunk. Then, for a time, she had disappeared from the steamship lanes. Where had she gone with the stolen goods?

The prisoners hesitated to explain this. Indeed, one of them became immediately dumb when he saw what the questioning was leading to. From his companion, however, was obtained some further information.

It was a fact that the submarine had left her base with the raider known as the *Sea Pigeon.* The underseas boat convoyed the bigger craft through the danger zone. It was not a difficult guess that when the two German boats had separated arrangements had been made for certain rendezvous at future dates—when and where? Besides, both boats were furnished with wireless.

"I would make that Heinie tell the whole story," Ensign MacMasters said.

"He might not tell the truth, sir," suggested Whistler Morgan.

"Then I'd hang him," declared the officer. "A threat of that kind will make these brave Heinies come to time. I know 'em!"

Commander Lang had his own way of going about this matter. He used his own good judgment. Whether he believed he had obtained the full truth from the prisoners or not about the *Sea Pigeon,* he turned the destroyer's prow toward the reaches of the western Atlantic, leaving the eastern steamship lanes behind.

The crew only knew that the *Colodia* must be following at least some faint trail of the raider. For the destroyer had been sent to get the German ship, and Commander Lang was not the man to neglect his work.

The radio men picked plenty of chatter out of the air; but, as far as the Navy Boys knew, though they tried to find out, little of it referred to the German raider.

One thing George Belding did learn from his friend, Sparks: The "ghost talk" was rife in the static once more. This wireless spectre had all the operators in a disturbed state of mind, to say the least.

"Sparks seems to have lost his common sense for fair, over it," Al Torance observed. "You know more about this aero stuff than any of us,

George. What do you really think it is? Somebody trying to call the *Colodia?*"

"That is exactly what Sparks doesn't know. He admitted to me that he caught the destroyer's name, but not her number. It's got so now this 'ghost' breaks in at a certain time in the afternoon watch—just about the same time each day. One of his assistants says he has spelled out *'Colodia,'* too. But it may be nothing but a game."

"How 'game'?" asked Ikey eagerly.

"Somebody fooling with a machine. Sparks says the sounds grate just like 'static!'"

"And that is as clear as mud," complained Frenchy Donahue.

"Could this unexplained talk be some new German code?" Whistler Morgan asked.

"All Sparks got is in English; but it doesn't amount to any sense, he says. If it is a code, he never heard the like before."

"It might be a German code with English words," put in Al. "One word in code means a whole sentence."

"I believe you! Wish Sparks would let me put on the harness and listen in on it," grumbled Belding. "I haven't forgotten the wireless Morse I learned back there before the war."

"Go to it, George," urged Al.

"I wish I knew Morse," added Whistler. "Get into it, George. Get Sparks to let you try a round

with the 'ghost talk.' He is friendly to you."

Thus encouraged, Belding took a chance with the chief of the radio during that very afternoon watch. It was during these hours, it was reported, that the strange and mysterious sounds broke in upon the receiving and sending of the operators aboard the *Colodia*.

"It is against the rules to let you into this room, boy," Sparks told him, smiling. "I can't give up my bench to a ham."

"I'm no ham, Mr. Sparks," declared Belding. "I've shown you already that I can read and send Morse."

"I don't know," the radio man murmured, shaking his head.

But he was really fond of George Belding, and the latter had to coax only a little more. This, as a rule, was not a busy hour.

He allowed the youth to slide in on the bench and handed him the head harness. George slipped the hard rubber discs over his ears and tapped the slide of the tuner with a professional finger.

"Plenty of static," he observed, for it was trickling, exploding, and hissing in the receivers.

"No induction," Sparks suggested.

Belding slid up the starting handle. The white-hot spark exploded in a train of brisk dots and dashes. Belding snapped up the aerial switch and listened. The message he was catching from

the air was nothing to interest him or the *Colodia.*

He was sensitizing the detector and soon adjusted the tuning handle for high waves. The chief watched him with a growing appreciation of the boy's knowledge of the instrument and its government.

On these high planes the ether was almost soundless. Only a little static, far-removed, trickled in. It was in the high waves that most of the naval work is done and the sending of orders to distant ships is keyed as fine as a violin string—and sounds as musical.

Sliding the tuning handle downward, Belding listened for commercial wave-lengths. Something—something new and unutterably harsh—stuttered in his ear.

He jerked back from the instrument and glanced suspiciously at Sparks.

"Do you hear it?" the latter demanded.

"I hear something," said the young fellow grimly. "It—beats—me——"

Were these the sounds that had been disturbing the radio men, off and on, for a week or more? Laboriously, falteringly, the rasping sounds grated against Belding's eardrums. It was actually torturing!

The atrocious sending began, in Belding's ear, to be broken into clumsy dots and dashes. The wave-lengths were not exactly commercial; nor

did the sending seem to be in the Continental code.

He listened and listened; he turned the tuner handle up and down. He got the sound-waves short and got them long; high and low as well. But one fact he was sure of: they were the same sounds—the same series of clumsy dots and dashes—repeated over and over again!

George Belding swung at last from the instrument and tore off the receiving harness. Sparks was grinning broadly upon him.

"Ugh!" ejaculated the youth. "Is it a joke? I am almost deafened by the old thing."

"What do you make out the ghost talk to be, George?"

"Are you sure it isn't a joke?"

"Not on my part, I do assure you," declared the radio man.

"Then," said Belding slowly, "I believe somebody is trying to communicate a message and for some reason can't quite put it through."

"Did you get the word *'Colodia'?"* Sparks asked quickly.

"No, sir. But one word I believe I did get," said the young fellow gravely.

"What's that?"

" 'Help,' " Belding repeated. " 'H-e-l-p, Help.' That's what I got and all I got. I do not think I am mistaken in that!"

CHAPTER XIX

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

HAD George Belding not been such a stubborn fellow he never would have stuck to his opinion about the strange call received by the *Colodia's* radio men, by wireless telegraph. For neither the chief, called Sparks, nor his assistants or students (the latter scornfully entitled "hams") had spelled anything like "help" out of the strange sounds to which Belding's attention had been called.

"Don't tell me such stuff," insisted the chief. "That's as old as the hills, George. When I first went into wireless, it used to be the standing joke to feed the student a 'Help! We are lost' call to steady his nerves. It was called C D Q in those old times."

"I am not kidding," said George Belding rather sullenly, for he did not like to be laughed at.

"No. And dont't try to make me believe that anybody is trying to kid you with a 'help' call," Sparks said, shaking his head.

But as we have said, George was stubborn. Sparks thought he had spelled out the name of the destroyer in those grating sounds. If so,

why shouldn't it be just as reasonable that Belding had heard the dots and dashes spelling 'h-e-l-p'?

Belding put this up to Whistler and Al when he had a chance to tell them about it in the first dog watch. He was not excited at all. He simply did not like to have his word doubted or be laughed at by Sparks.

"As for being laughed at," the very sensible Philip Morgan said, "it strikes me that I wouldn't be worried by that. Your opinion is just as good as old Sparks' or anybody else's, for that matter. Eh, Al?"

"Why not?" returned the other Seacove boy. "It was George heard the sounds, not Sparks. Get a chance to listen in again, George."

"Can it be possible that there is somebody trying to send a message for help to the *Colodia?*" Whistler went on slowly.

"Cracky!" ejaculated Al, "I didn't think of that."

"Sparks says that he thought he spelled out the destroyer's name. George has heard the word 'help.' Get after it, George!" he added, earnestly. "Don't let 'em put you down."

"But who under the sun would be doing such a thing?" demanded Al. "Is it a joke, after all?"

"It will be a sorry joke if our Government gets after the sender. The law is mighty strict about

private wireless plants, you know," said Phil Morgan.

"There is one sure thing," declared Belding. "If anybody is trying to call this ship, they don't know much about the regulation codes and sendings. They don't know the destroyer's number, and the way they handle Morse is a caution to cats!"

"Stick to it," advised Whistler.

But George did not really need to be urged in this direction. The next afternoon watch he was back at the radio room begging to "listen in" again. Because of the interest the radio men had begun to feel in the "ghost talk" in the air at this time of day, both Sparks and one of his assistants were on hand.

The regular radio men were listening for the peculiar voice in the wireless, at all hours; but it seemed to be confined now to an hour or two in mid-afternoon. One after the other the *Colodia's* radio force slipped on the receiving harness and listened to the mystery. Belding got his chance, in spite of the fact that Sparks laughed at him.

This time Belding kept the instrument tuned down to the commercial waves on which it seemed the "ghost talk" was the more easily transmitted. Now and then he got the spelling of a letter clearly. But not a word in its entirety did he hear on this day—not even "help."

"I get 'r', 'd', and 'b' a lot," he signed, turning the receiver over to Sparks again. "They are in rotation—'r', 'd', 'b'—and sometimes there follows another 'd'. There are letters missing between them, excepting between the 'b' and the first 'd'."

"No 'help' stuff, eh?" queried Sparks.

"Nor any *'Colodia',"* snorted Belding.

But he sat and watched the radio chief give his full attention to the mystery, and after a minute or two saw that the man was spelling something out carefully on the pad of scratch-paper under his hand. Belding peered over his shoulder and saw Sparks set down these letters as he heard them in the sound waves:

R DB
R DB R
R DB D
RE B D
R D RD
R DB
RE I

Sparks pulled off the harness and swung about to look at George Belding.

"Is that about what you heard?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir. At least, in part."

"Well, hang it all!" cried Sparks. "That's a still newer combination. It's neither *'Colodia'* nor 'help.' I tell you it beats me, George."

When Belding left the wireless room he took with him the piece of paper on which Sparks had written. The letters in combination seemed to mean nothing; but he showed them to Whistler and Al Torrance when he found those two chums together.

"Looks like one of those puzzles they have on the back page of the papers at home," said Al. "You know: The ones you are supposed to fill in with other letters to make 'em read the same up and down and across."

"This is no acrostic," said Belding firmly.

But Whistler stared steadily at the paper for some minutes without saying a word. Only his lips slowly puckered, and Al nudged him to break off the thoughtful whistle which he knew his chum was about to vent.

"Huh? Oh! All right," murmured Morgan, accepting Al's admonition.

"What do you see?" asked Belding.

"I see that it is the same word each time, of course," replied Whistler. "But I don't believe my eyes."

"What's that?" demanded the other two boys.

"If the ghost of the air," said Whistler gravely, "did not spell out the name of this destroyer this afternoon, it certainly did try to put over the name of another ship."

"Wow!" exclaimed Al. "Tell us."

"What ship do you mean?" asked Belding, scowling thoughtfully at the paper.

Quickly Whistler covered the letters on the sheet as, with his own pencil, he filled in the gaps between them. When he flashed the sheet before the eyes of his two friends each of the lines of letters made the same word. And that word was:

"REDBIRD"

"My goodness! You have gone crazy, Phil Morgan!" almost shouted Belding.

"Cracky! that's the ship your sisters and Belding's folks are aboard, you know," gasped Torry. "Why, Whistler, I believe with George that you *are* crazy!"

"All I see," said Morgan, quite unruffled, "is that George brought us some letters that, very easily and sensibly, make the name of his father's ship now bound for Bahia."

"Cracky!" exclaimed Al again.

"But—but do you suppose anything has happened to father, mother and the girls? Do you really, Morgan?"

"Who said anything about 'something happening' to them?" demanded his friend with some heat. "I am merely pointing out the possibility that the name of that ship is in a wireless message that somebody seems anxious to put over."

"But who—what——"

"Exactly!" exclaimed Whistler, stopping Beld-

ing at that point. "We don't know. We have merely learned that the radio men first spelled out the name of this destroyer. Now you and the chief have caught the name of the *Redbird*. The two names seem to be in the combination. Therefore, is it 'crazy', as you fellows say, for me to suggest that perhaps the mysterious message deals with both of the vessels named?"

"I begin to see your idea, Phil," admitted Belding. "But it did shake me. You know, I spelled out 'help' first of all."

"But you did not get that to-day," said Whistler quickly. Then he added: "We know the *Redbird* is fitted with wireless."

"Yes."

"Perhaps somebody aboard is trying to send a message to us just for fun."

"For fun, indeed!" exclaimed Al Torrance. "People aren't fooling with the radio 'for fun' in these times."

"I don't know. You know how girls are," drawled Whistler. "George, does your sister Lilian know anything about Morse and the radio?"

"Oh, my prophetic soul!" gasped Belding, suddenly arousing to the point Whistler made. "I should say she did! Lil got to be fairly good at both sending and receiving when we had the plant on the roof of our house."

"Could this be Lilian trying to get a message over to us—just for fun?"

"Cut out the 'fun' business," implored Al. "That doesn't sound reasonable." But that was the very idea that caught George Belding.

"She's that kind of girl," he declared. "Tell her she must not do a thing, and she's sure to try it. But I don't understand——"

"Of course, it's only a guess on my part," Whistler said quickly. "But can't you think of some way to try her out—identify her, you know? Tell Sparks what you think and get him to let you try to send her a message."

"Whew!" exclaimed Al. "So there's nothing more than *that* in it? Shucks! Another mystery gone fooey."

"Phil's idea does sound awfully reasonable," added Belding, evidently much relieved in his mind.

Phil Morgan's countenance did not reveal his secret gravity. He still remembered that the word "help" had been connected with the names of the two craft—the destroyer and the merchant vessel—which seemed to be a part of the strange message out of the air.

CHAPTER XX

TOO LATE AGAIN

If the Seacove boys, George Belding and the radio force, found an interest aside from the general object of the *Colodia's* cruise, the bulk of the crew were not so fortunate. Their keen outlook for the German raider the *Sea Pigeon,* began to be dulled as the tropical days dragged by.

The destroyer was running down a westerly course near enough to the equatorial regions to cause every one to feel the languor that usually affects the northern-born in southern climes. The boys lolled around the decks, and found drill and stations hard tasks indeed.

Everybody said: "Is it hot enough for you?" And with the permission of the executive officer more than half the crew slept on deck instead of below in their hammocks.

During a part of the afternoon watch the engines of the destroyer were stopped, a liferaft was lowered on the shady side of the ship, and the boys in squads were allowed to bathe, the quartermaster's boat with two sharpshooters in it, lying off a few yards on the watch for sharks.

The *Colodia* had an objective point, however,

toward which she was heading without much loss of time. Hour after hour she steamed at racing speed and through an ocean that seemed to be utterly deserted by other craft.

In those wartimes the lanes of steam shipping, and sailing craft as well, had been changed. Ships sometimes sailed far off their usual course to reach in safety a port, the track to which was watched by the German underseas boats. The *Colodia* would ordinarily have passed half a hundred ships on this course which she followed toward the American shores.

Cruising the seas, whether for pleasure, profit, or on war bent, is a very different thing nowadays from formerly. Practically this change has been brought about by a young Italian who had a vision.

No longer does a ship go blindly on her course, unable to learn who may be her neighbor, deaf to what the world ashore is doing as long as she remains out of port.

The wireless telegraph has made this change. The radio furnishes all the gossip of sea and land. Even in wartime the news out of the air puts those at sea in touch with their fellowmen.

All day long, and through the night as well, the radio force on the *Colodia* might listen to the chatter of the operators on land and sea. Unnecessary conversation between operators is

frowned upon; but who is going to "listen in" on a couple of thousand miles of wireless and report private conversations between working radio men?

On the *Colodia* a man was at the instrument practically every minute, day or night. Commercial messages, whether warnings, code sendings of three or four Governments, the heavy sound-waves from Nauem, the German naval headquarters, flashes from ship to ship—all this grist passed through the wireless mill of the destroyer.

All the time, too, they were seeking news of the *Sea Pigeon,* the German raider, which the *Colodia* had been sent out particularly to find. Of course, the finish of the submarine One Thousand and One had been reported to the naval base, and an emphatic, "Well done!" had been returned. But the sinking of the submarine, after all, was not the main issue.

As the destroyer had combed the sea for her prey, so she combed the air by her wireless for news of the raider. And when the news came it was as unexpected as it was welcome. The men were offering wagers that the destroyer would end in seeing New York again rather than sighting the *Sea Pigeon,* when just after the wheel and lookout were relieved at four bells of the morning watch, the radio began to show much activity.

Messengers passed, running to and fro from

the station to the officers' quarters. There was not usually much radio work at this hour, and the watch on deck began to take notice.

George Belding slid around to the radio room and showed a questioning countenance to Sparks who was himself on duty.

"What's doing, sir?" he asked the radio chief.

"Well, we haven't picked up your particular S O S; but there is trouble somewhere dead ahead."

"I can feel that the engines are increasing speed, sir," Belding said. "Does it mean that we may have a scrap with a sure-enough Hun?"

"The message sounds like it," admitted the radio man softly. "There'll be trouble, I reckon. You'll hear all about it, soon enough."

Commander Lang himself appeared on the bridge, and this was a surprisingly early hour for him. Other officers gathered, and there began a somewhat excited conference. The boatswain's mates failed to pipe the clothes lines triced up. Half an hour earlier than usual the hammocks were ordered stowed. Ikey Rosenmeyer, who loved to sleep till the last minute, was tumbled out unceremoniously and had to stow his hammock in his shirt!

The hammock stowers likewise stopped down the hammock cloths early, and the whole crew had their mess gear served out long before the

galley was ready to pipe breakfast. During the meal hour word was passed to shift into uniform instead of work clothes.

"It's extra drill, I bet," declared one of the boys pessimistically. "More work for the wicked."

"There is something doing, sure enough," Phil Morgan declared. "I think we shall be piped to stations before long."

He had not seen George Belding then. When the latter reported what he had heard at the radio room Whistler was more than ever confident that there was something of importance about to take place. It was some time, however, before the real fact went abroad among the members of the crew.

The radio had indeed brought news at last of the raider. She was supposed to be lurking near a point not more than two hours' run ahead of the *Colodia*. A report from a cattleship had been caught, stating that she was chased just at daybreak by a steamship that was heavily armed with deck guns, and that she surely would have been overtaken by the enemy had fog not shut down and given the cattle boat a chance to zigzag away on a new course.

The description of the attacking vessel fitted that of the raider, *Sea Pigeon*. Commander Lang and his officers believed that there was a chance of meeting the German—of approaching her, indeed, unheralded.

There was a good deal of fog about; but overhead the sky was clear and there was the promise of a hot day before noon. Having the approximate latitude and longitude of the cattleship when she sighted the raider, Commander Lang believed the *Colodia* had a good chance of overtaking the German ship while she was lingering about on the watch for her prey.

The fog was growing thinner, but had by no means entirely disappeared even in the vicinity of the destroyer, when her wireless began to chatter. Sparks sent a messenger on the run to the bridge. This incident visibly increased the excitement of both officers and crew. Word was passed in whispers from the petty officers stationed near the bridge that the call was another S O S.

A second message followed almost immediately. The *Colodia's* engines were speeded up. The crew was piped to quarters. The gun crews made ready their initial charges. Everything about the decks was properly stopped down and the destroyer was quickly put into battle trim.

Message after message came from the radio room. Belding came breathlessly to Whistler and Al Torrance with the announcement that it was a sugar ship being attacked, and surely by the raider. Soon the distant reports of guns could be heard.

"If the *Susanne* can only hold the Heinies off till we get there," said Belding, who had learned the name of the sugar-laden ship, "we will show them something."

"We will show them if the German raider isn't too fast for us," responded Al. "They say this *Sea Pigeon* is mighty fast and a pretty nifty boat into the bargain."

"The old *Colodia* will show her," said Whistler with confidence. "Just give us a chance!"

The destroyer plowed on through both sea and fog, while the rumble of the guns grew in magnitude. Whether much damage was being done or not, a good many shots were exchanged by the combatants. It might have been a veritable naval engagement.

The fog swirled about the bows of the *Colodia,* and the lookouts strained their eyes to catch the first glimpse of the fighting ships. As the fog was thinning from above, the watchers in the tops had the best chance of first sighting the sugar ship and the raider that had attacked her.

A wireless transmitted news of the fight as it progressed. The Germans had not yet succeeded in putting the merchant ship's radio out of commission. In response, the destroyer had assured the *Susanne* of her own approach.

"Hold on! We are coming!" the *Colodia's* radio had sent forth.

Enemy half mile off. Steaming two knots to our one," came the response from the sugar ship.

"Fight it out! We are coming!" repeated Sparks from the destroyer.

"Shell has burst abaft the afterhouse companion. Two of after gun crew killed. Volunteers take their places. We have put a shell through enemy's upperworks."

"Great! Keep it up!" chattered the *Colodia's* radio.

"Another shell has reached us aft. Women and children sent forward to forecastle."

The final sentence, read aloud by an officer from the bridge, excited the crew of the *Colodia* to the utmost.

The American seamen were spurred to fighting pitch now. Their only desire was to get at the raider and her crew.

"It's a running fight between her and the *Susanne,*" Morgan said to Al Torrance. "Otherwise the German shells might have reached the sugar ship's engines before this."

"Think of them shelling that merchant ship that has women passengers aboard!" groaned Al. "What can those Germans be thinking of? What will happen to them after this war is over?"

"They all believe they are going to win," Belding said gloomily. "That is what is the matter. And if they *should,* the whole world will be

treated just as ruthlessly as the Germans please."

"Don't talk that way! Don't talk that way!" shouted Al. "I won't listen to such a possibility! They can't win this war, and that's all there is to it!"

"Quiet, there," admonished the voice of an officer, and the boys subsided to whispered comments, one to the other.

Again and again the wireless chattered the cry for help. The guns thundered ahead. Suddenly there arose a rosy light in the sky, spreading through the fog in a wide wave of color.

"She's blown up!" was the general and hopeless ejaculation from the crew of the destroyer.

"Her engines went that time, sure enough—and her boilers, too," groaned Ensign MacMasters, who chanced to stand near the gun crew to which Whistler and Al belonged and where Belding was stationed in reserve. "She's helpless now. If we don't get there soon——"

There were no more radio messages. The calls to the *Susanne* were not answered. The melting fog soon gave the lookouts a clearer view ahead.

"Steamship tops and rigging in sight, sir!" was the cry to the bridge. Then, a minute later: "She's on fire, sir, and sinking by the stern."

"Ah!" muttered Ensign MacMasters. "We are too late again!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE MYSTERY MESSAGE

In a very few minutes the crew of the *Colodia* —all those above deck, at least—gained a view of the burning ship.

She was completely wrecked at the stern, and it was probably true, as Ensign MacMasters had said, that her engines and boilers had been blown up. She lay helpless and sinking.

All her passengers and her crew had been driven forward by the flames. The bow of the steamship was slanting up into the air at a threatening angle. The men were lowering such boats as there remained from the forward davits.

The *Susanne's* bulk, the smoke, and the last shreds of the fog hid the enemy from the view of the destroyer's crew. But suddenly they saw a high-powered motor-boat appear beside the crippled steamship. Armed men filled it. Two stood up as the boat swung in to the steamship's side and caught the hanging davit ropes. They hooked these ropes to the launch, fore and aft.

As quickly as one can tell it, the Germans "tailed on" to the ropes and hauled their own boat into the air. In a minute she overhung the

rail of the sugar ship and the Germans swarmed out upon her deck.

The forward guns of the *Colodia* might have thrown shells into this launch, but such missles would have imperiled the lives of the people on the *Susanne*.

The *Colodia's* officers through their glasses could see the remaining passengers and crew of the sugar ship lined up against the rail under the threatening rifles of the Germans. There was considerable activity on the deck of the sinking ship during the next few minutes.

The destroyer swerved in her course, her commander hoping to get around the *Susanne* and mark the position of the raider before the motor launch could get away from the sinking ship. But the Germans worked so quickly that this chance was very small indeed. The destroyer was still a long shot away from the exciting scene.

A number of men were seen staggering along the deck of the sugar ship bearing some heavy object. It was hoisted into the launch and then the latter was lowered quickly into the sea, most of the Germans scrambling down as best they might.

"It's the purser's strong box!" shouted one of the lookouts in the destroyer's top. "And they are going to shoot the poor guy, I bet, for not giving up the combination!"

Other members of the *Colodia's* company had already observed a man's figure, with his hands tied behind him, standing at the farther rail of the *Susanne.* The four last men from the raider's launch, all ready to descend into the boat, raised their rifles and fired across the deck at the victim. The man fell, and the murderers swarmed down the rope into the launch.

All this the excited crew of the destroyer saw while they were yet too far away to be of any help. Commander Lang might have ordered his guns to open fire; but the danger of hitting the *Susanne* was too great.

The officer commanding the German launch was too sharp to give the coming destroyer any safe chance of making a hit without damaging the sugar ship. He steered his motor-boat right along the hull of the crippled *Susanne,* under the shower of flaming débris that had begun to fall, and went out of sight in a cloud of smoke that had settled upon the sea.

This smoke offered a splendid bit of camouflage for the raider and the launch. Up to this point the lookouts in the destroyer's tops had caught no glimpse of the *Sea Pigeon.* She was a very wary bird indeed!

The smoke cloud from the burning ship spread across the sea and supplemented the fast dissolving fog in hiding the German craft. But sud-

denly a lookout hailed the Colodia's quarter:

"Steamship's top, sir! Six hundred yards abaft the sinking ship, sir!"

Orders snapped to the forward gun crews. They could see nothing but fog and smoke astern of the *Susanne;* but their knowledge of elevation, distance, and other gunnery lore, encouraged them to hope for a "strike."

The guns began to speak, and the shells shrieked over the stern of the sinking steamship, exploding somewhere in the smoke cloud. There followed no shots in reply. The Germans were shy. The thickening smoke shut out again all sight of the *Sea Pigeon.*

The condition of the *Susanne* was threatening. Commander Lang dared not consider a pursuit of the German raider when lives were in such peril here.

Two boats were all that had been put out from the sugar ship. Her other small craft were smashed by the shellfire of the raider.

Some forty or more people were gathered in the bows of the *Susanne,* and they must needs be taken off quickly. The big merchant vessel was surely going down.

Her two boats had already pulled away to a safe distance. Commander Lang would not risk his own small craft near the trembling hull of the *Susanne,* but swerved the course of the destroyer

that she might run in under the high bows of the ill-fated ship.

Signals were passed, and the remaining members of the *Susanne's* crew hastened to prepare slings in which to lower the passengers to the destroyer's deck.

"Volunteers to go up there and help those people! Smart, now!" sang out the executive officer of the *Colodia* through his trumpet.

Ikey Rosenmeyer and Frenchy Donahue, who were both free, leaped forward at the call. With Seven Knott and two other sailors, they swarmed up to the high bows of the imperiled ship.

The two Seacove boys were well trained in the uses of cordage and in knotting and splicing. They seized a coil of rope and, working together swiftly, safely lowered three women and a wounded man over the rail to the destroyer's deck before they were piped down from the *Susanne*.

Even the dead body of the murdered purser was sent aboard the *Colodia*. The flames were by that time surging upward, and it was almost too hot to stand upon her forward decks. The bows of the ship were being thrust up as her stern sank. At any minute the wreck might plunge beneath the sea.

"Back all!" rose a stentorian voice from the destroyer.

Ikey and Frenchy went over the rail and swarmed down their respective lines. They were guided inboard to the firm deck of the destroyer. The other workers followed. The *Colodia* backed swiftly away.

Nor was this done a minute too soon. The wreck was already wallowing from side to side like some wounded monster of the sea. The air pressure blew up the forward deck. Had the survivors remained longer they would have been overwhelmed!

A roaring like that of a great exhaust pipe came from the interior of the sugar ship. The sea began to seethe in a whirlpool about her. She stood almost upright on her stern as she sank.

Down, down she went, while the destroyer turned tail and scudded away at top speed. To be caught in that whirlpool would have spelled disaster for even as staunch a craft as the *Colodia* undoubtedly was.

The *Susanne* disappeared slowly, with great combers roaring about her. Beaten to a froth, the waves leaped, white-maned, upon her tossing sprit, and finally hid even that from sight. The sea was a cauldron of boiling waters, and that for hundreds of yards around.

The two boats that had escaped from the wreck had been pulled far away. They were loaded heavily, but were not at the time in any danger.

The *Colodia*, therefore, did not swing her nose in their direction.

Instead, she was speeded into the rapidly thinning smoke cloud which covered the sea astern of the sugar ship. There the German raider was somewhere hiding. It was possible that one of the shells from the destroyer might have done her some damage, or might even have struck the motor launch.

These hopes were doomed to disappointment, however. Five minutes after the *Susanne* was utterly sunk, the smoke was so dissipated that the lookouts on the destroyer could view the ocean for miles about.

In the distance, and reeling off the knots at most surprising speed, was a steam vessel that could be naught else than the *Sea Pigeon*. She had picked up her motor launch and escaped. The *Colodia* might have followed and overhauled her in a long chase; but she could not desert the two boatloads of survivors from the sugar ship here in the middle of the Atlantic.

The radio man was sending queries for help for the survivors of the *Susanne;* but no ship answered nearer than two hundred miles. It was the first duty of the naval vessel to save the helpless, and she could not fight the German pirates and make these people comfortable, too.

So pursuit was abandoned, much to the dis-

satisfaction of her crew, and the *Colodia* swung around and approached the two open boats. These, with their cargoes of human freight, were picked up. Then the destroyer was headed into the north, there to meet a Mediterranean-bound steamship that would take off the *Susanne's* castaways and leave the naval vessel free again.

Of course the Navy Boys were vastly interested in the experiences of the people from the sunken ship. Few of her crew, and no passengers, had been lost. When the boilers had blown up two of the firemen were killed and several wounded.

The courageous purser who had refused to tell the Germans the combination of the safe in his office, was the only officer killed. In that safe had been the wealth of several passengers. The raider wanted gold more than anything else.

"Just like the pirates of old, I tell you," Frenchy said to his chums. "Those old fellows used to make their captives walk the plank. Now these Huns line 'em up and shoot them. I only hope we catch and sink that *Sea Pigeon,* and every German aboard of her!"

"Look out he doesn't bite you, fellows," advised Al. "He's got hydrophobia."

But they all felt increased anger at the enemy when they had talked with the survivors of the *Susanne.* Their experience was enough to stir the blood of any listener.

"That *Sea Pigeon* has got to be caught!" was the assurance of the boys and men of the *Colodia's* crew.

The cruise, after this experience, was a much more serious matter to them all than it had been before. As far as the Seacove boys and Belding went, it had become pretty serious in any case. The prime reason for this lay in the message of mystery that the radio men continued, at times, to half catch out of the air.

George Belding confided to Sparks the name Phil Morgan had made out of the uncertain letters which the chief had written down after hearing them repeated in his ear while at the radio instrument. "Redbird"; that seemed plain enough.

"And the *Redbird* is the ship my folks and Whistler's sisters are sailing on to Bahia," explained Belding. "Why, she might be right out yonder, not so many miles away," and he pointed into the west.

"You mean to say your sister can send Morse?"

"She used to be able to. She wasn't quick or accurate, but she could get a message over."

"There is something altogether wrong with this sending," said the radio man thoughtfully.

"I know it, sir. She wouldn't know any code. She would probably spell out every letter and word. We only get a part of what is sent. That is, if it is Lilian who is doing this."

"It is mighty interesting, this 'ghost talk'," the chief said slowly. "I can see you are putting altogether too much faith in the possibility that the stuff is real. Why, we often get the most inexplicable sounds out of the air! It is a very long chance that this is a real message, or that it is from your sister, George."

"It's a message from somebody and from somewhere; and I'm awfully interested, too," declared Belding. "I wish you'd let me listen in again."

"Oh, I'll do that little thing for you," agreed Sparks. "If there is nothing much doing in radio in the afternoon watch, come around again."

With this promise George Belding contented himself. He told Whistler and the other boys he was going to set down every letter of the mystery message that he could comprehend, and see afterward just what could be made out of them—sense or nonsense!

CHAPTER XXII

THE WIRELESS CALL FOR HELP

HAVING delivered the survivors of the *Susanne* to the greater comforts of an Italian liner bound eastward, the *Colodia's* own course was set for the south and west. Her commander and crew hoped to pick up news of the *Sea Pigeon* once again. At any rate, the German raider had been last seen making off toward the West Indies and the Caribbean.

The destroyer was below the Tropic of Cancer now, and the weather was exceedingly hot. A dress of dungaree trousers and sleeveless undershirt was the most popular uniform forward of the bridge, decided Donahue.

"The brass hats who have to fairly live in their uniforms are greatly to be pitied."

Drills were not pushed, and many duties became merely a matter of form.

Yet there was a very serious train of thought in the minds of the Seacove boys and George Belding, as has been shown. There had been uncertainty enough regarding the voyage of the *Redbird* to Bahia; but since the beginning of what the radio men called the "ghost talk" out of

the air, the five friends had all felt a greater measure of anxiety.

Of course, it was by no means certain that these letters in Morse that suggested the name *Redbird* had anything to do with Mr. Belding's ship and her company. Yet, not having heard in any form from the party bound for Bahia since the ship left New York, it was not strange that George Belding and Phil Morgan, at least, should be especially troubled in their minds.

During the afternoon watch on this day in which George had gone to Mr. Sparks again, the young fellow got relief and approached the radio room. The chief was off duty and one of his assistants was at the instrument. But the older man was lolling in the doorway and welcomed Belding with a smile.

"Jim, here," said Sparks, nodding to the student at the instrument, "was just telling me 'ghost talk' is coming over again. He says he gets 'Colodia' as clear as can be."

"My goodness! Then somebody *is* trying to call us, Mr. Sparks!" murmured Belding.

"I don't know. I've been keeping track, busy as we have been for a couple of days. I really think there is some attempt to put a message over; but whether it is for fun or serious, I would not dare state. Or whether it is meant for us or not. It isn't the same message each time."

"But you do believe that somebody is trying—or something?"

" 'Something' is good," growled Sparks. "I've made out 'Colodia' more than a few times myself. And I agree that the letters you caught the last time you were listening in, and which I heard myself, may spell 'Redbird'. Then, you know, you said you heard 'help.' "

"Well, I did!" snorted Belding.

The radio chief pushed a square bit of paper into his hand. On it were set down without spacing of any kind the following line of letters:

"c,o,l,o,d,i,a,h,e,l,p,r,e,d,b,i,r,d,l,b."

"I will be honest with you, George," he said, watching closely the flushing face of the youth. "I really got those letters not half an hour ago. They were repeated in just that order several times. What do you make out of them?"

Belding's excitement was growing momentarily. He seized Sparks' pencil and wrote under the row of letters swiftly and surely:

"Colodia—Help—Redbird—L.B."

The chief nodded. "' L. B.' being your sister's initials, eh?"

"Yes, sir," cried George breathlessly. "Lilian Belding."

"Get over there on the bench. Jim will give you the harness. Listen in and see what you can make of it now," said Sparks, himself excited.

George slid on to the bench and Jim handed him the receivers and strap. The youth fitted the discs to his ears, settled himself on the seat, and opened the key. As usual the static sputtered in the receivers for a little. He tuned down to the short waves and the strange, grating sounds began.

It was very bad Morse—clumsy and irregular; but that it was Morse, Belding was confident. There was something wrong either with the sender or with the instrument sending.

Belding seized the pad of scratch paper and poised his pencil. For a few moments the "ghost talk" ceased. Was it all over for the time? He waited impatiently, growing hot and cold with nervousness.

There were plenty of other wave-sounds in the air, had he cared to listen to them. But he knew the monotonous and rasping letters—on a lower plane, even, than the commercial waves—were carried only at the level to which he had tuned the instrument.

Suddenly: *"Colodia! Colodia! Colodia!"*

The words were rapped out harshly but briskly —each letter plainly to be read. Then Belding began to set down the unevenly sent letters as he could make them out, with a dash where he failed to catch the letter intended:

"c,o,l,o,d,i,a,h,e,l,p,g,e,t,—,a,n,—,s,—,i,z,—,d,r,

e,d,b,i,r,d,—,o,r,b,—,—,i,a,h,e,l,p,l,b,e,l,d,i,—,—."

George could not stop then to see whether these letters made any sense or not. He believed the main trouble with the message was that the sender used no punctuation.

For a brief time the mystery ceased. Then again the sounds broke out—the same clumsy, uncertain Morse; so bad, indeed, that at first the listener could make out a letter only now and then:

"l,—,—,—,—,l,—,n,g,—,—,—,a,—,e,r,e,—,b,i,r,—,—,a,i,n,—,e,d,—,—,t,m,—,—,t,i,n,—,g,e,r,—,—,n,s,s,e,i,z,e,d,s,—,i,—,h,e,l,p."

There was silence again as far as the "ghost talk" was concerned. Belding waited with his pencil poised over the paper.

His eyes meanwhile scanned the first list of letters he had set down. At first glance he believed he made out the first three words in the message. They were, "Colodia,help,get." After the break and several disconnected letters the word "redbird" fairly leaped at him from the page. Then, after a few misses and letters that made no sense, he got "help" again. Then he saw as clear as day: "L.Belding"—his sister's signature!

"Colodia—help—get—Redbird—help—L.Belding."

The young fellow shook all over as he sat there

before the radio instrument. This was a message from his sister, Lilian. Nothing could thereafter shake his belief in this statement. And that she and the *Redbird* were in peril Belding was positive.

The second combination of letters offered fewer understandable words than the first, or so it seemed to Belding at that moment. The beginning of this second message was entirely indistinguishable, but toward the end he got two words complete—"seized" and "help."

Altogether he was assured that he had guessed the main trouble with the sender of these strange messages. The words were all run together and the awkward and uneven sending made the unpunctuated words very hard to understand.

Sparks touched him on the shoulder. He had a paper in his hand that a messenger had just brought. It was a radio that must be sent at once.

"Let me at it for a minute, son," the radio chief said. "Here's a report for headquarters' base. Did you get anything?"

"I—I don't know," murmured George, giving place to the man. He left the room, taking with him the paper on which he had penciled the broken messages.

Secretly he was confident that he had heard a call over the radio for help and that his sister Lilian, on the *Redbird,* was sending it.

He wanted to see Philip Morgan about it—to show the leader of the Seacove Navy Boys this paper with the two cryptograms he had picked out of the air. Like Al Torrance, Ikey Rosenmeyer, and Frenchy Donahue, George had come by this time to look upon Phil Morgan as a fellow of parts. Phil would be able to help him make these messages out, if anybody could!

But he could have no time with Whistler until second dog watch that evening. Then he got the Seacove youth aside and showed him what he had managed to set down in letters from the "ghost talk" he had listened in on that afternoon.

Whistler did not know a thing about Morse, or much about radio, but he had a sharp eye and a clear head. Belding had translated enough words of both messages to suggest the general trend of them.

"How do you know where the letters 'break' if you can't hear all the dots and dashes?" Whistler first asked, scanning the paper seriously. "That appears curious to me."

"Not in this case. If it is Lil sending—or whoever it is—the sender is so unfamiliar with the Morse American code that there is a hesitation between the letters. Why, I thought at first the message was in Continental code, which is, you know, entirely different from American."

"It's all news to me, old boy. Go on."

"Why, there's nothing more. If I could hear those words repeated several times I reckon I'd get most of the letters—and get them straight."

"I see," murmured his friend. "And as it is, you have got a good many of the words, only you haven't noticed it."

"What's that?"

"Why, it is plain," said Whistler, "that several of the same words are used in both messages."

"Yes. 'Help', *'Colodia', 'Redbird'.*"

"More than those," said Whistler. "See! You have 'seized' plain as the nose on your face in the second set of letters."

"I see that."

"And there it is in the first list," and Whistler pointed as he spoke to a combination of letters and blanks almost immediately following "Colodia —Help—Get." "There is 's-e-i-z-e-d', plain enough. And, yes, by Jove! There is 'redbird' in the second message. Look here, old man! Let me go through this."

"That is what I want you to do," responded Belding excitedly.

"In the beginning the message surely says: 'Colodia! Help! Get!'——No! That should not be 'getmans' that 'seized Redbird'. No, no! There is the same combination in the lower message. It is 'ger' down there, not 'get'," muttered Whistler, vastly interested now.

With pencil and paper he set to work. In five minutes he offered Belding the following paragraph as a translation in full of the first message:

"Colodia! Help! Germans seized Redbird for Bahia. Help!—L. Belding."

"Oh, Whistler, you've got it! And it is as we have feared. Those papers that Emil Eberhardt stole from me back in England have played the dickens with the *Redbird* and the folks. I am sure it is Lil trying to call me—the splendid kid that she is!"

"Hold on! Hold on!" Whistler said, but encouragingly. "Let's get the other message, too."

He set to work on that; but the first of it baffled him. He could only begin to make it out where the word "Redbird" occurred. From that place on, it was not so difficult: "Redbird painted out —mutiny—Germans seized ship—Help." This second message was not signed with Lilian Belding's name or her initials, but George knew the sending to have been the same as that of the first call for help.

"But, Phil!" gasped the New York youth, "we don't know a living thing about where the *Redbird* is, or what is happening to our folks."

"You'd think she would have tried to tell their situation in the message," rejoined Whistler slowly.

"If she knew. She's a girl, and wouldn't be likely to interest herself much in navigation."

"Tut, tut, my boy! Everybody at sea takes an interest in the course of the ship and her speed. Of course they do. Wait! Here is the abbreviation for longitude right here—'long.' Two blanks for the figures you did not catch, George, my boy!"

"Do you think so?" murmured his friend.

Whistler wrote it "Lat,—,—, long.—,—." Then he had an inspiration and put in "name" before "Redbird."

"There we have it in full—except for the figures of the *Redbird's* position. Look out for them next time, George. They are important."

"Next time, Morgan?" gasped George Belding, excitedly.

"Certainly. It stands to reason your sister is sending out messages for help whenever she gets a chance at the radio instrument on the *Redbird*. And take it from me, the most important thing she is trying to put over is the position of the ship from day to day. They take the sun at noon, and as soon afterward as she can, Lilian gets to the radio and sends that information into the air.

"Believe me, George, you have some smart sister, and no mistake!" said Whistler Morgan in much admiration.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SEA PIGEON IN SIGHT

GEORGE BELDING was for running right off to the radio chief, Mr. Sparks, to ask another chance to listen in on the wireless for further messages from the *Redbird*. The supposition that Germans in her crew had mutinied and seized his father's ship became at once a certainty in George's mind.

Whistler, however, with his usual cautiousness, steadied his friend.

"There is no use making such an application now, George," he said. "There will be none of this 'ghost-talk' in the air at this hour."

"Oh!"

"You know, they only hear those messages in the afternoon watch. That is the only time, in all probability, that your sister can get to the radio. The rest of the time, perhaps, the regular radio man is on duty, and he is probably in league with the mutineers."

"My goodness, Phil!" ejaculated Belding, "that word 'mutineers' makes me tremble."

"It suggests the rough stuff, all right," agreed the Seacove lad. "I hope my sisters and your folks will not be treated too outrageously by the

gang that has got possession of your father's ship."

"If we could only find them! We're tied here on this old iron pot—"

"Hold on! Don't malign the *Colodia*. We may be glad for their sakes that we are on this destroyer."

"I don't see it. I wish I was on the *Redbird*."

"A fat chance! With those Germans committing acts of barratry like painting out the *Redbird's* name! That shows they are desperate men. And what could we do to them if we were in their power?"

"What help can we give the folks from this distance?" groaned Belding.

"This is a matter that will have to be brought to the attention of the Old Man, George. I am going to speak to Mr. MacMasters and ask him to get us a chance to interview Commander Lang."

"Will he listen to us, do you think?"

"Of course he will," said Whistler with confidence.

The two friends could scarcely sleep in their watch below, and in the morning their anxiety was apparent to the other boys.

Whistler watched for his chance and spoke to Ensign MacMasters. The ensign would do anything within reason for Whistler and his friends.

He considered the four Seacove lads about the finest boys aboard the *Colodia.*

Upon hearing the story of the mystery message he became vastly interested. He went to see Sparks first of all, and then hurried to Commander Lang's cabin. One reason why Mr. MacMasters was so eager to see the commander was because Sparks had told him that during the previous evening an operator at the Weather Bureau station at Arlington, Virginia, had asked the *Colodia's* chief radio man:

"Have you caught message being put out for *Colodia?*"

While a radio man on the troopship *Kinkadia* demanded:

"Anybody named Belding on *Colodia?* He appears to be wanted by a ham."

Which was not a very respectful way of referring to George's sister. It showed, however, that Lilian's uncertain sending was attracting attention at several points.

It was mid-forenoon before the two friends were called into the presence of Commander Lang. Belding was bashful and allowed Whistler to do most of the talking. And he was impressed by the ease and coolness with which his friend went about the matter.

Commander Lang met Phil Morgan as he would have met another man. There was nothing

"kiddish about Whistler," Al had once said. The commander of the *Colodia* examined the messages as the boys believed they were intended to read. He at once approved the application of George Belding to be attached to the radio squad until further notice. He sent for Sparks and heard his story of the mystery message. In every way he showed an acute interest in the affair.

If the *Redbird* was somewhere at sea in charge of mutineers — Germans at that! — to find her would be a task for the *Colodia*. But as Whistler had immediately seen, it was agreed that to discover the course of the *Redbird* and her daily position by the sun were the most important points.

The boys were most impatient for the time to come when George would take his "trick" at the radio instrument again. This would not be until the afternoon watch, when the radio man then on duty had orders to give the instrument over to George if the "ghosttalk" again was heard.

It had been decided that George should try to reply to the mysterious call. By spelling out the name of his father's ship, the *Redbird,* or calling Lilian Belding by name, it might be possible to communicate with the vessel and send a word of courage to the passengers. The desire was to encourage the sender of the strange message to repeat again and again the *Redbird's* situation.

It was only possible to guess at the course of the ship bound for Bahia, as well as her present position. Lilian Belding had doubtless called for the *Colodia* because her brother and Whistler Morgan served on that naval vessel, not because she had any idea as to where the destroyer was.

The two vessels might be a desperately long distance apart. That fact could not be overlooked. The boys were in a fever of expectation.

As it drew near eight bells of the forenoon watch there came a message by wireless that was even more exciting for most of the crew than the mystery of the "ghost-talk."

"An S O S!" whispered the messenger to George Belding as he darted from the radio station to the bridge.

Swiftly the watch officer read the message: "H. M. S. S. *Ferret,* from Porto Rico for Liverpool, attacked by German cruiser *Sea Pigeon,* lat. twenty-one, long. fifty-eight. S O S."

The exciting information was instantly communicated two ways—to the commander's cabin and to the chief engineer. The *Colodia* leaped forward, conned on her new course at once. They were off in another race to overtake the elusive German raider—and this time, perhaps, to find her.

"But we may be going right away from the *Redbird!*" Belding complained to the other boys.

"On the other hand, we don't know but it may be taking us right toward your father's vessel," Whistler said, trying to comfort his friend.

He felt worried himself about it. There would be no chance to try to reach the *Redbird* by radio during the afternoon watch. Whistler was just as anxious as Belding; only he kept these feelings much more to himself.

The radio sparked message after message to and from the British ship. The *Colodia* was the only naval craft within possible reach of the spot from which the call came, although there were both British cruisers and torpedo boats on the Bermuda and Bahama stations.

But they were heavy craft, and it would have taken days for a boat from either station to reach the point indicated by the *Ferret*. Whereas, with good fortune, the American destroyer's engines would drive her to the spot in three hours.

Could the British merchant vessel keep up the unequal fight for that length of time? The German must have already engaged her, or the radio message from the *Ferret* as first transmitted would not have been so exact.

From out of the air came messages from all directions urging the *Colodia* on. The *Ferret's* S O S and the destroyer's answer had been picked up by both ship and land stations. Ships long out of range, it would seem, became interested in the

attempt to "get" the raider which had already cut such a swath among shipping in the Atlantic.

Remembering the fate of the *Susanne,* the crew of the *Colodia* had some reason for believing that this dash of the good destroyer was a "long shot." It seemed scarcely possible that she would arrive at the scene of the fight in time to save the merchant ship from complete disaster.

Yet the radio messages were encouraging. After an hour the *Ferret* reported no serious damage done and that they had put two shells aboard their pursuer from their well-manned deck guns.

"Well done, *Ferret!*" flashed the destroyer's radio. "Keep up the good work."

Yet every moment it was expected aboard the *Colodia* that either the wireless on the steamship would be destroyed, or she would report serious injury to her machinery. The raider would, of course, strive to place her shells where they would utterly cripple her victim—either under the stern and smash the propellers, or amidships and burst boilers or wreck engines.

The *Colodia's* crew were ordered to stations, more for the sake of keeping order on deck than for aught else. Every man who could be spared from below was ranged along the decks. Gun covers were removed, breech blocks looked to, and every man was keyed to a high pitch.

"Talk about efficiency!" growled Ensign Mac-

Masters. "We've *got* it. Just because the Germans have been abusing the word is no reason why we should not properly use it. They are often efficient to a useless end; but we'll show that sea-raider, if we get a chance, that the old *Colodia* is more efficient than a German ever dared be!"

The destroyer plowed on and on, while every minute that elapsed without their hearing that the *Ferret* was wrecked encouraged hope. Now and again word came that the British ship, with dogged persistency, was holding out. She had been hit now several times, and the *Sea Pigeon* was reported as being almost on top of her. Still she was providentially saved from disaster.

Through the heat of a tropical noontide the destroyer rushed on toward the fight. The crew looked for no shelter now, they only desired to see the smoke of the guns ahead.

And before six bells of the afternoon watch they had the desire of their eyes! The lookouts began to yell the glad tidings to the bridge, and the crew took up the news with a mighty shout.

The wind was against their hearing the guns at first, but finally the thundering roll of the weapons reached the ears of the Americans. The *Colodia* seemed to increase her speed. The smoke rolled back from her stacks and lay flat along the

sea as though painted there with one stroke of a giant brush.

Within a few minutes they could see balloons of smoke billowing up ahead, but these were from no ship afire. They were the announcement of gun discharges.

On the destroyer tore through the quiet sea. The lookouts hailed for the upperworks of the *Ferret.* Another message came by radio that the attacked steamship had seen and hailed with delight her rescuer.

The explosion of the guns ahead brought joy to the hearts of the *Colodia's* crew. There was the prospect of a real fight! The smoke of the raider was announced. The destroyer's course was swerved ever so slightly that she might pass the battered *Ferret* and draw the fire of the German from the merchant ship.

Then the order was given, and her own guns began to speak. It was at long range, but the marksmanship of American gun crews had become really wonderful. The high, shrieking shells sought out the German ship, and within the first dozen sent over, the radio man on the *Ferret* reported a "strike." One of the *Sea Pigeon's* smokestacks was carried away!

The fight was on. The Americans hoped to get near enough to the German boat to bring her to terms within a very short time.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BLIND CHASE

THE excitement of the dash for the embattling ships left the *Colodia's* company no thought for anything else. Even dinner had been half-neglected, although that came early in the race.

As for weather indications or the like, nobody thought of such things. And here suddenly appeared a phenomenon that bade fair to help the Germans and place the destroyer in a less confident position.

The American ship had arrived just in time to save the *Ferret;* her upperworks were badly wrecked although providentially the wireless outfit of the British ship was not crippled.

One of her guns was put out of commission and a shell under the stern had knocked out the propeller just as the Colodia entered the fight. She swung now to the slow current, and as the destroyer rushed past her the British crew could only cheer her on. Their work was done—and done well!

But here came a cloud rolling along the surface of the sea from the south that offered shelter for the raider, the prow of which was already turned

in that direction. The German had no intention of remaining to fight the battle out with the guns of the destroyer.

The raider was not, of course, any match for the American naval vessel. It was the part of wisdom for her to run. Besides, she was already crippled, and it would have been but a matter of a few minutes before she would either have to capitulate or be sunk had she continued in the fight. The *Colodia* might even have kept out of range of the raider's guns, circled about the German, and destroyed her at pleasure. Or she could have sent a torpedo against the pirate ship and blown her to bits.

Here, however, fortune helped the enemy. The cloud of fog laid along the surface of the sea offered the *Sea Pigeon* refuge. She proved again that she was a "wary bird!"

Into the cloud she dashed, and where she went after that—although the fog bank was low—the lookouts of the *Colodia* could not tell.

"If we only had a hydroplane to send up!" said Whistler Morgan to his chums. "The time will come when every destroyer will have its pair of hydroplanes for observation. From a thousand feet up, that fog would never shelter the raider. The hydroplane could signal us the raider's position and we'd follow her just as though it were clear weather."

In this case, however, the commander of the destroyer did not wish to desert the *Ferret* until he had learned her condition. The *Colodia* described a wide circle and steamed back within hailing distance of the crippled British ship.

Fortunately there were no women or other passengers aboard this vessel. Her wounded were few, too. The hull of the craft had not suffered. Already her machinists were at work on the propeller. They had new blades in the hold, and the end of the shaft was not injured. They proposed to sweat on the new propeller, make such other repairs as were necessary, and then attempt to limp into the Bermuda station under her own steam.

"You can't beat those fellows!" said Ensign MacMasters admiringly. "The merchant sailors nowadays have more to face than we do, and with less chance of getting safely out of a scrimmage. I wouldn't want to be hobbling along in that cripple to the Bermudas with that German pirate in the vicinity."

Just where the *Sea Pigeon* had gone behind the fog they could only surmise. But Commander Lang ordered a course south by west, hoping that the raider would turn up again.

Phil Morgan and George Belding had time to think of the *Redbird* and her precious freight once more. It was little satisfaction for either to

know that Sparks and his assistants were on the lookout for messages from the sailing ship.

Nothing came up that night to give the anxious boys any satisfaction. Sparks reported nothing in the morning. But as the hour drew near when the mysterious messages usually came over, both Belding and Whistler Morgan hung about the door of the radio room.

The radio chief knew just how anxious they were and he did not scold them. Soon after dinner he sent George to the bench to try to pick up the uncertain sounds that he believed came from the *Redbird's* wireless.

George could only get a letter now and then. The sending—if it was it—was weaker than before. In desperation the youth began to send himself:

"I,I,I, (aye,aye,aye) Colodia!"

He repeated this over and over again. An hour passed before he got what seemed to be a direct answer. Then:

"Colodia! Help! Redbird!"

Belding fairly shouted aloud in his excitement. But when he turned to see Mr. Sparks and the others at the door watching him, he subsided and began to send calmly:

"Give position! Give position! Redbird, give position!"

This went on for some time, and then he caught

the grating and uncertain sound of what he was confident was his sister's sending. He tuned his instrument up and down the scale before getting the best adjustment. Out of the air he finally received letters which he wrote down falteringly and passed to Mr. Sparks and Whistler. While the message was being repeated the radio man and Phil Morgan made out the following paragraph:

"Ship Redbird for Bahia seized by German mutineers. Position, lat. 17, long. 59. Help!—L. Belding."

"It's Lilian, all right! Hurray!" exclaimed Whistler, and Belding heard him.

The latter was now repeating, again and again, the announcement that the *Colodia* heard the message and was coming. Sparks hurried away to seek Commander Lang with the news. The position of the sailing ship was within easy reach of the destroyer.

But the messages stopped suddenly. Not another word came from the *Redbird*. Belding came away from the instrument at last, feeling anything but hopeful.

"Something's happened to her," he whispered to Morgan. "I fear Lilian has got into trouble by her work at the *Redbird's* wireless. What do you think, Phil?"

"I am not going to lose hope. We will find

the ship and rescue our folks from the mutineers. Don't doubt it, George!"

"It was difficult to keep up their courage, however, when there was so much uncertainty regarding the sailing ship's condition. It might be, too, that the latitude and longitude was several points off. A full degree is sixty miles, and sixty miles is a long way across the ocean!

Just before dark they raised the smoke of a steamer ahead and sailing athwart the destroyer's course. This surely could not be the *Redbird;* yet the destroyer could not allow the stranger to pass without investigation.

Her radio could get no answer from the ship. It seemed as though the stranger was running away from the *Colodia.* Naturally suspicion was aroused in the minds of the commander that it was the *Sea Pigeon.*

But it became a blind chase as night fell upon them. They saw no lights, and the tropical night comes so suddenly that to have overtaken the steamship before dark was an utter impossibility. The destroyer swung back into her direct course for the point from which the last radio message of the *Redbird* was supposed to have come.

CHAPTER XXV

A NEW CONVOY

At dawn, while a light fog still overspread the sea, the crash of distant guns was brought to the ears of the watch on duty. From what direction the reports came it was impossible for the *Colodia's* officers to determine.

It was still too dark for the lookouts to make out anything at a distance, even had the morning been perfectly clear. But all hands were aroused, the word running from deck to deck that the destroyer was within sound of a naval action of some kind.

It was not a signal gun they heard, for several shots were fired simultaneously. Then there was silence again. The *Colodia* sped on her course, the hope being expressed by all that "blind luck," if nothing else, might lead her to the scene.

Just before the sun rose above the sea line the lookouts began to shout their discoveries. Out of the fog, but at a great distance, they saw the upper spars and canvas of a great sailing ship. The *Colodia's* direction was changed to run closer to this vessel.

"It's a chance we have found her," murmured

Whistler to George Belding. "She is square rigged, and she is some ship in size, believe me!"

For, moment by moment, the fog was thinning and the outlines of the spars and sails became clearer. From the deck of the destroyer these became visible.

The excitement of the Seacove boys and George Belding was quite overpowering. That their friends aboard the *Redbird* were in the hands of mutineers they were assured; and now the guns, which began to speak again, forewarned of added peril!

As the sun came out they saw that the upper canvas of the ship they had sighted was being furled. Sail after sail disappeared. It was as though she was being stripped of her canvas.

"She's under the guns of that raider, I'll bet a cent!" declared Al Torrance. "So she has had to stop her headway. Those guns were for the purpose of making the ship—whoever she is—lie to."

"But if it is the *Redbird,* the Germans already have command of her," cried Belding.

"We don't know who she is yet," said Whistler.

"Oi, oi!" gasped Ikey Rosenmeyer, "I'm so excited yet I can't keep still. Isn't it *great,* Frenchy?"

"Sure, it's the greatest experience we've had," admitted the Irish lad. "For we don't know whether we are approaching friend or foe."

Nor was the destroyer's approach visible to those aboard the sailing ship for some time. Her color and the gray fog that lingered on the surface of the sea aided in this.

There were no more guns for a time, but it was quite evident that the sailing vessel had lost much headway. It was then that the lookouts in the tops of the *Colodia* first glimpsed the ship that had fired the guns. She was a steamer coming rapidly up on the course of the sailing vessel.

Two more guns were fired, but the shells seemed not to have burst near the victim of the outrage. They were meant merely as a threat. The sailing craft which was nearer to the destroyer was observed to be signaling with flags. The signals were in a code that the signalmen of the *Colodia* did not know, and they so reported to Commander Lang.

The Huns aboard the *Redbird* are signaling to the Huns on the *Sea Pigeon,*" was the confident declaration of prophetic Al Torrance.

"If it is so, you can just believe that they are telling the raider of our approach. They must see the *Colodia* coming now," Whistler observed.

"Suddenly, with the sun's round face appearing above the sea line, the last whisps of fog were whipped away. The tropical heat burned up the moisture in a flash.

"Boats at the davits of the ship now being

manned, sir!" came the hail from one of the destroyer's lookouts.

"They are abandoning ship!" was the word passed along the decks.

"If it is the *Redbird!*" murmured Belding to Phil Morgan, "what do you suppose will happen to my father and mother and the girls?"

Whistler had no answer ready. He kept his lips shut grimly and stared straight ahead.

The distance of the destroyer from the steamer believed to be the German raider, was too great as yet for a shot to be tried. They were near enough to the sailing ship to see two boats launched before it was considered well to use the guns.

Then the *Colodia* sent her first shells close to the boats that were being rowed toward the steam craft.

"There are only men in those lifeboats," declared Ensign MacMasters, who had been examining the distant specks through powerful glasses. "It looks as though the mutineers had abandoned ship and passengers and were attempting to join their fellow countrymen aboard the *Sea Pigeon.*"

Immediately the commander ordered shells to be dropped between the small boats and the steamer, and the long distance guns began to crack at the raider over the heads of the escaping mutineers.

With her smoke trailing behind her and the guns barking in rapid succession, the *Colodia* raced toward the scene. She kept well away from the sailing craft, but she drove on in a way to cut off the two rowboats from the raider.

That it was the *Sea Pigeon,* nobody aboard the destroyer now doubted.

"We're going to kill two birds with one stone, boys!" declared Ensign MacMasters cheerfully to the Navy Boys. "I'll bet that sailing ship is the one your friends are aboard.

His cheerfulness did not wholly overcome George Belding's depression. George was now worrying as to what had been done to the passengers of the *Redbird* before the mutineers left the sailing ship!

That she was his father's vessel he was confident. Her rig was familiar to him.

As the destroyer drew nearer, too, her crew saw certain figures on the deck of the sailing vessel that seemed to be wildly signaling the naval craft. Just then the *Colodia* could not stop to investigate. Her work was to settle first with the Germans.

The raider had finally started away from the vicinity, leaving the crews of the two boats to shift for themselves. It was her only chance for escape, for the destroyer could outsteam the *Sea Pigeon,* fast as she was.

A fortunate shot knocked away the jury smokestack which had been put in place of the one the destroyer had previously smashed. Interior damage was done by this shell, too. This was immediately apprehended by the raider's movements.

"Hold fire!" commanded the executive officer of the *Colodia*. Signals were sent up ordering the German to surrender. Almost at once a white ensign was displayed, and at the sight of it the destroyer's crew went mad with excitement.

Better than merely sinking the *Sea Pigeon*—they had captured her! Their work of five weeks at sea, away from their base, had ended gloriously. The raider doubtless had a valuable cargo, and the fact that she would be put out of commission was a heavy blow to the German arms.

Swiftly the destroyer approached and, at a certain distance, sent a boat off to the *Sea Pigeon* to bring her captain and a part of her force aboard the American ship. But Commander Lang, understanding fully the anxiety of Phil Morgan and George Belding, ordered another motor boat launched and allowed them to be members of her crew. She was sent directly to the sailing ship which now lay about two miles away.

Passing the two lifeboats, Ensign MacMasters, who was in command of the launch, questioned briefly their frightened crews. At first they de-

nied that they were mutineers. They declared the raider had commanded them to abandon their ship and row aboard the *Sea Pigeon*.

But when they were asked the name of the sailing ship, and other pertinent queries, the sailors broke down. All but their leader.

Suddenly George Belding uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Phil! Phil Morgan!" he shouted, forgetting in his excitement to address their commanding officer. "Don't you know that fellow steering the second boat?"

"I see him," returned Whistler. "I—I *do* know him! Mr. MacMasters! That is the spy from the Zeppelin we told you about!"

"Emil Eberhardt, I do believe," murmured Belding. "It's no wonder things went wrong aboard the *Redbird* when that scoundrel was able to cross the ocean and join her crew."

No further information could be obtained from the mutineers at that time. They were quite helpless, and could only row on to the destroyer and give themselves up as commanded.

Meanwhile the motor launch ran alongside the big, square-rigged ship. Three girls at the rail shrieked their delight at sight of Whistler and George Belding. The latter's father and mother likewise appeared as the boys, following Mr. MacMasters, went up the ladder which had been left

hanging over the side when the mutineers abandoned the ship.

The Germans had carried away Mr. Belding's money—and it was a great sum—in the lifeboats; but they dared not throw it overboard and so, later, it was recovered. Otherwise the mutineers had done little damage, nor had they treated the Americans on the ship badly.

After the greetings were over the story of how the radio messages were sent was told in full. The radio man aboard the *Redbird* was a German sympathizer. He usually slept through the afternoon watch, however, and it was then the girls had been able to get regularly at the instrument. The rest of the crew thought Lilian was only playing with the radio. She told them she could receive a little, but she sent in so clumsy a way that the Germans paid little attention to her.

"And, of course, I never was a Morse expert," the girl said, laughing. "You used to make fun of me, George, when we had the radio plant at home; but I guess I could be an operator, if I put my mind to it, as well as you."

"You're all right, Lil," declared her brother. Then with a grin, he added: "I know Phil thinks you are. He can't keep his eyes off you."

There was a great deal to say, of course; but there was more to do. The boys were left aboard while Mr. MacMasters returned to the *Colodia*

with Captain Lawdor of the *Redbird,* who had been locked into his cabin by the mutineers. He wished to confer with Commander Lang regarding the make-up of a crew to work his ship into some port. She could not go all the way to Bahia with only the handful of men who had remained faithful.

This was overcome very easily, however. The captured raider was repaired and was sent north with a prize crew. Then the commander of the destroyer sent help aboard the *Redbird* and agreed to convoy the sailing ship into a safe zone.

Farther south the Brazilian warships were patroling the coast of South America, and they would accompany the big sailing vessel into Bahia. For, of course, Mr. Belding had no intention of changing his plans, having already come so far from New York.

The girls were too courageous to lose spirit. Phoebe, who had been so ill when last her brother had seen her, was getting plump again. She had marvelously improved during the brief weeks of her sojourn at sea.

Altogether, both Philip Morgan and George Belding had become quite happy and content when the *Colodia* finally signaled the *Redbird* good-bye and turned her prow north once more. She had been ordered to follow the captured raider into Hampton Roads, there to refit.

Nevertheless, as America's activities in the war —especially her naval activities—were increasing rather than diminishing, the Navy Boys did not expect to be idle, even if the *Colodia* was laid up for a while.

"No rest for the wicked," quoted Al Torrance, wagging his head.

"Oi, oi!" cried Ikey. "You know you are not looking for a rest, Torry."

"Seems to me," Belding said, "that it will be rather nice to walk on the streets once more."

"Bet we'll all be land-sick when we get ashore," grinned Frenchy Donahue. "How 'bout it, Whistler?"

Whistler said, thoughtfully: "But wouldn't it be nice if we could have had our leave ashore at Bahia, with the girls?"

"Wow, wow!" shouted the Irish lad.

"He's hopeless," groaned Ikey Rosenmeyer. "He is even worse than Frenchy ever was. Why, he can't keep his mind off those girls at all!"

But the older lad only grinned. It was small matter to Whistler Morgan whether they tried to worry him or not. Lilian Belding was certainly a pretty girl!

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